NOW 9

JULY—AUGUST

The Poems of D. H. Lawrence, by **Kenneth Rexroth.** Chains of Freedom (II), by **Herbert Read.** Vision and Image, by **Louis Adeane.** Letter from Japan, by **Harry Roskolenko.** A Study in Decline, by **George Woodcock.** A Note on Social Responsibility, by **D. S. Savage.**	ESSAYS
Poems, by **John Atkins, Thomas Good, Thomas Parkinson, William Porritt, Emanuel Litvinoff, Alex Austin, Charles Fox.**	POETRY
The Choice, by **Patricia Johnson.**	STORIES
Book Review, by **Paul Mattick.**	REVIEWS

: TWO
LINGS

EDITED BY GEORGE WOODCOCK

NOW

VOLUME NINE

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL. 3

KENNETH REXROTH. *The Poems of D. H. Lawrence.* 4

HERBERT READ. *Chains of Freedom* (II) 17

LOUIS ADEANE. *Vision and Image.* 23

HARRY ROSKOLENKO. *Letter from Japan.* 33

POEMS by JOHN ATKINS, THOMAS GOOD, THOMAS PARKINSON, WILLIAM PORRITT, EMANUEL LITVINOFF, ALEX AUSTIN, CHARLES FOX 36-41, 51

GEORGE WOODCOCK. *H. G. Wells, A Study in Decline.* 42

D. S. SAVAGE. *A Note on Social Responsibility.* 52

PATRICIA JOHNSON. *The Choice.* 60

PAUL MATTICK. *Stalin, Trotsky and Lenin* (II) 67

EDITED BY GEORGE WOODCOCK.
BUSINESS MANAGER: INGEBORG WOODCOCK.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: Thirteen Shillings (England), $3.25 (America and Canada).

All manuscripts will be read and considered, but no responsibility can be accepted for their safety, and they will only be returned if accompanied by a stamped, addressed envelope.

Published by G. & I. WOODCOCK, 24, Highgate West Hill, London, N.6, England.

PRINTED IN ENGLAND by Express Printers, 84a, Whitechapel High Street, London, E.1.

Politics and Letters

a quarterly survey of intellectual background.

The First Number will contain:

The Letters of D. H. Lawrence	*Clifford Collins*
The Politics of W. B. Yeats	*Grattan Freyer*
Individual, Group and Social Function	*J. Hemming*
Soviet Literary Controversy	*Raymond Williams*
A Revaluation of K. R. Popper	*Henry Collins*
Russell and Western Philosophy	*John Wisdom*
The Truman Administration	*W. W. Rostow*

Reviews by *A. J. Ayer, Roy Pascal, Walter Taplin, Wolf Mankowitz, Akiba Shonfield, and others.*

On sale in July, or direct from the publishers.

SUBSCRIPTION RATE: Ten Shillings per annum (post free).

The Critic Press Ltd., Mistley Heath, Essex.

MEANJIN

A Literary Magazine

Edited by C. B. Christesen

NOW in its seventh year of continuous publication, *MEANJIN* is recognised as being the most significant and broadly-based of the Australian literary periodicals. Besides containing a quarterly cross-section of creative and critical work by Australian and New Zealand writers, there are poetry and prose selections by prominent British, American and French writers.

Short stories, essays, poetry, discussion, book reviews, art reproductions, photographs of writers, line-drawings.

SUBSCRIPTION: Ten Shillings a Year; single copies, 2s. 6d. (posted 2½d.)

Published in Melbourne

at The Meanjin Press

DISTRIBUTORS in the United Kingdom:

LONGMANS, GREEN & CO., LTD., London.

Editorial

The Critic's Freedom

For years we have been only too painfully aware of the growing influence and power of state and capitalist monopolies in almost every class of productive lfie. The great chemical, oil and steel monopolies have long played a sinister role in the provoking of wars and in the restriction of research into productive methods which might have helped considerably to build a free and plentiful society in our own day.

Perhaps even more sinister, however, are the monopolies which are arising in the cultural sphere. During the war, the state in England, through the Ministry of Information and the B.B.C., played an obstrusive and offensive part as patron and indirect censor of literature and the arts. But long before that the great newspaper and cinema combines had wielded an enormous influence in their respective fields.

At first the influence of these organisations on artistic production was indirect, in that they created a general debasement of standards and initiated a demand for an ever-lowering type of kitsch writing to satisfy their need of opium—or should we rather say marihuana?—for the masses.

Now, however, there are signs that the great cinema combines are beginning to advance out of their own proper sphere and to attempt a control, not only over film production, but also over film criticism, attempting to dictate what the critics should say over the miserable pieces of cinematographic kitsch with which they flood the market. The recent action of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in trying to persuade the B.B.C. to drop Miss Arnot Robertson as film critic, because she lashed their films with great justification, is a monstrous example of this kind of interference. The letter which this firm sent to the B.B.C. was an almost incredible attack on the very principles of free criticism.

At present this attack on free speech is halted by the High Court decision against Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, but acts of the judicature are two-edged, and we should place no reliance on them. It is for the writers themselves to realise their responsibilities and to insist on those elementary rights of free criticism on which liberty of thought, and thence liberty of action, are ultimately based.

Kenneth Rexroth

The Poems of D. H. Lawrence

At the very beginning Lawrence belonged to a different order of being from the literary writers of his day. In 1912 he said, "I worship Christ, I worship Jehovah, I worship Pan, I worship Aphrodite. But I do not worship hands nailed and running with blood upon a cross, nor licentiousness, nor lust. I want them all, all the gods. They are all God. But I must serve in real love. If I take my whole passionate, spiritual and physical love to the woman who in turn loves me, that is how I serve God. And my hymn and my game of joy is my work. All of which I read in . . ."

Do you know what he read all that in? It makes you wince. He thought he found all that in Georgian Poetry, 1911-1921! In Lascelles Abercrombie, Wilfred Gibson, John Drinkwater, Rupert Brooke, John Masefield, Walter de la Mare, Gordon Bottomley! What a good man Lawrence must have been. It is easy to understand how painful it was for him to learn what evil really was. It is easy to understand why the learning killed him, slowly and terribly. But he never gave up. He never stopped trusting people and hoping. And he went on writing exactly the gospel he announced in 1912, right to the end.

Lawrence thought he was a Georgian, at first. There are people who will tell you that his early poetry was typical Georgian countryside poetry, *Musings in the Hedgerows,* by the Well Dressed Dormouse. It is true that early poems like the *Wild Common, Cherry Robbers* and the others, bear a certain resemblance to the best Georgian verse. They are rhymed verse in the English language on "subjects taken from nature". Some of the Georgians had a favourite literary convention. They were anti-literary. Lawrence was the real thing. His "hard" rhymes, for instance, "quick-kick, rushes-pushes, sheep dip-soft lip, gudgeon-run on". I don't imagine that when Lawrence came to "soft lip" he remembered that bees had always sipped at soft lips and that, as a representative of a new tendency it was up to him to do something about it. I think his mind just moved in regions not covered by the standard associations of standard British rhyme patterns. At the end of his life he was still talking about the old sheep dip, with its steep soft lip of turf, in the village where he was born. Why, once he even rhymed wind and thinned, in the most unaware manner imaginable. That is something that, to the best of my knowledge, has never been done, before or since, in the British Isles.

The hard metric, contorted and distorted, and generally banged around, doesn't sound made up, either. Compulsion neurotics like

Hopkins and querulous old gentlemen like Bridges made quite an art of metrical eccentricity. You turned an iamb into a trochee here, and an anapest into a hard spondee there, and pretty soon you got something that sounded difficult and tortured and intense. I think Lawrence was simply very sensitive about quantity and to the cadenced pulses of verse. In the back of his head was a stock of sundry standard English verse patterns. He started humming a poem, hu hu hum, hum hum, hu hu hum hu, adjusted it as best might be to the remembered accentual patterns, and let it go at that. I don't think he went about it deliberately, either.

This verse is supposed to be like Hardy's. It is. But there is always something a little synthetic about Hardy's rugged verse. The smooth ones seem more natural, somehow. The full dress, Matthew Arnold sort of sonnet to Leslie Stephen is probably Hardy's best poem. It is a very great poem, but Arnold learned the trick of talking like a highly idealised Anglican archbishop and passed it on to Hardy. That is something nobody could imagine Lawrence ever learning, he just wasn't that kind of animal.

Hardy could say to himself, "To-day I am going to be a Wiltshire yeoman, sitting on a fallen rock at Stonehenge, writing a poem to my girl on a piece of wrapping paper with the gnawed stub of a pencil," and he could make it very convincing. But Lawrence really was the educated son of a coal miner, sitting under a tree that had once been part of Sherwood Forest, in a village that was rapidly becoming part of a world-wide, disembowelled hell, writing hard, painful poems, to girls who carefully had been taught the art of unlove. It was all real. Love really was a mystery at the navel of the earth, like Stonehenge. The miner really was in contact with a monstrous, seething mystery, the black sun in the earth. There is a vatic quality in Lawrence that is only in Hardy rarely, in a few poems, and in great myths like *Two on a Tower*.

Something breaks out of the Pre-Raphaelite landscape of *Cherry Robbers*. That poem isn't like a Victorian imitation of medieval illumination at all. It is more like one of those Coptic illuminations, with the Christian content just a faint glaze over the black, bloody, "Babylonian turbulence" of the Gnostic mystery. I don't know the date of the *Hymn to Priapus*, it seems to lie somewhere between his mother's death and his flight with Frieda, but it is one of the Hardy kind of poems, and it is one of Lawrence's best. It resembles Hardy's *Night of the Dance*. But there is a difference. Hardy is so anxious to be common that he just avoids being commonplace. Lawrence *is* common, he doesn't have to try. He is coming home from a party, through the winter fields, thinking of his dead mother, of the girl he has just had in the barn, of his troubled love life, and suddenly Orion leans down out of the black heaven and touches him on the thigh, and the hair of his head stands up.

Hardy was a major poet. Lawrence was a minor prophet. Like Blake and Yeats, his is the greater tradition. If Hardy ever had a girl in the hay, tipsy on cider, on the night of Boxing Day, he kept quiet about it. He may have thought that it had something to do

with "the stream of his life in the darkness deathward set", but he never let on, except indirectly.

Good as they are, there is an incompetence about the early poems. They are the best poetry being written in England at that time, but they are poems of hunger and frustration. Lawrence was looking for completion. He found it, of course, in Frieda, but hadn't found it then. The girl he called Miriam wrote a decent, conscientious contribution to his biography. She makes it only too obvious that what he was looking for was not to be found in her. And so the Miriam poems are tortured, and defeated, and lost, as though Lawrence didn't know where he was, which was literally true.

Between Miriam and Frieda lies a body of even more intense and troubled poems. Those to his mother, the dialect poems, the poems to Helen. The mother poems are amongst his best. They are invaluable as direct perspectives on an extraordinary experience.

From one point of view Lawrence is the last of a special tradition that begins with St. Augustine and passes through Pascal and Baudelaire amongst others, to end finally in himself. There is no convincing evidence for Freud's theory that the Oedipus Complex dates back to some extremely ancient crime in the history of primitive man. There is ample evidence that Western European civilization is specifically the culture of the Oedipus Complex. Before Augustine there was nothing really like it. There were forerunners and prototypes and imitations, but there wasn't the real thing. The *Confessions* introduces a new sickness of the human mind, the most horrible pandemic and the most lethal ever to afflict man. Augustine did what silly literary boys in our day boast of doing. He invented a new derangement. If one makes an intense effort to clear one's mind and then reads Baudelaire and Catullus together, the contrast, the new thing in Baudelaire, makes one shudder. Baudelaire is struggling in a losing battle with a ghost more powerful than armies, more relentless than death. I think it is this demon which has provided the new thing in Western Man, the insane dynamic which has driven him across the earth to burn and slaughter, loot and rape.

I believe Lawrence laid that ghost, exorcised that demon, once for all, by an act of absolute spiritual transvaluation. *Piano, Silence, The Bride,* and the other poems of that period, should be read with the tenth chapter of the ninth book of the *Confessions.* It is the beginning and the end. Augustine was a saint, but say the Japanese, there are acts of salvation by which man can raise himself to heaven, but a devil is substituted in his place. Lawrence drove out the devil, and the man stepped back. Or, as the Hindus say, with an act of absolute devotion from the worshipper, the goddess changes her aspect from maleficent to benign.

It is not only that Lawrence opened the gates of personal salvation for himself in the mother poems. He did it in a special way, in the only way possible, by an intense realization of total reality, and by the assumption of total responsibility for the reality, and for the realization. Other people have tried parts of this process, but only the whole thing works. This shows itself in these poems, in their very technique

There, for the first time, he is in full possession of his faculties. He proceeds only on the basis of the completely real, the completely motivated, step by step along the ladder of Blake's "minute particulars". Ivor Richards' *Practical Criticism* contains a symposium of his students on Lawrence's *Piano*. It makes one of the best introductions to Lawrence's poetry ever written. And one of the qualities of his verse that is revealed there most clearly is the uncanny, "surreal" accuracy of perception and evaluation. Objectivism is a hollow word beside this complete precision and purposiveness.

From this time on, Lawrence never lost contact with the important thing, the totality in the particular, the responsibility of vision. Harrassed by sickness and betrayal, he may have faltered in fulfilling that most difficult of all the injunctions of Christ, to suffer fools gladly. He may have got out of contact with certain kinds of men at certain times. He may have become cross and irritable and sick. But he never lost sight of what really mattered, the blue vein arching over the naked foot, the voices of the fathers singing at the charivari blending in the winter night, Mellers putting flowers in the hair of Lady Chatterly.

The Helen poems are strange. They all have a weird, dark atmosphere, shot through with spurts of flame, a setting which remained a basic symbolic situation with Lawrence. It is the atmosphere of the pre-war I novel, young troubled love in gas-lit London, draughty, and dark and flaring, and full of mysterious movement. Probably the girl's name was not Helen. Lawrence thought of her as dim, larger than life, a demigoddess, moving through the smoke of a burning city. For certain Gnostics Helen was the name of the incarnate "female principle", the power of the will, the sheath of the sword, the sacred whore who taught men love. Helen seems to have been the midwife of Lawrence's manhood. At the end, something like her returns in the Persephone of *Blue Gentians*. Rebirth—no one leaves adolescence cleanly without a foretaste of death.

Ezra Pound said that the dialect poems were the best thing Lawrence ever wrote. This is just frivolous eccentricity. But they are fine poems, and in them another figure of the myth is carefully drawn. They are the poems of Lawrence's father. The coal miner who emerges nightly from the earth with the foliage of the carboniferous jungles on his white body. Lawrence's little dark men, gypsies and Indians and Hungarians and Mexicans and all the rest, they are not dark by race, but dark with coal dust. The shadow of forests immeasurably older than man has stained their skins. Augustine was never at peace until he found his father in the real man, whose feet went down into the earth. In certain poems, where he speaks as a fictional woman, the erotic intensity is embarrassing to those of us who still live in the twilight of the Oedipus Complex. What had been evil in the father image becomes a virtue, the source of the will, deep behind the mother image, the germ of action, the motile flagellate travelling up the dark hot tube, seeking.

The boy watching the miners rise and descend in the yawning maw of the earth in Nottinghamshire, the man of forty watching the Indians pass in and out of a lodge where an old man is interminably

chanting—there is a sense of strangeness, but not estrangement. There is no effort to violate the mystery of paternity, because it is known in the blood. Lawrence knew by a sort of sensual perception that every cell of his body bore the marks of the striped Joseph's coat of the paternal sperm.

All this world of the early poems, and of the *White Peacock*, *The Trespasser*, the first draft of *Sons and Lovers*, is an unborn world, a cave, a womb, obscure, confused. The figures have a mythical vagueness about them. The sensual reality seems to be always struggling to escape into another realm of meaning. So many of the images are drawn from birth, escape, confinement, struggle. Critics have found much of their Freudianism in the work of this period. Had they been better read, they would have found Jung above all else, and certainly Rank. Lawrence had yet to read Freud or Jung and may never have heard of Rank.

Some shockingly ill-informed things have been written about Lawrence's relation to psychoanalysis. In the first place, he was not a Freudian. He seems to have read little Freud, not to have understood him any too well, and disliked him heartily. In the winter of 1918-1919 he read Jung, apparently for the first time, in English. Presumably this was *The Psychology of the Unconscious*. Jung was very much in the air in those days, as he is again. There was probably a great deal of amateur talk about his ideas amongst Lawrence's friends. But Lawrence does not seem to have had much more to go on, and *The Psychology of the Unconscious* is only the beginning of the system later elaborated by Jung. As far as I can discover, Lawrence never met or corresponded with Jung, nor did he ever become intimate with any of his students. Later, Mabel Dodge tried to bring them together by correspondence. The story goes that Jung ignored her letters because they were written in pencil. So much for that.

Lawrence wrote quite a bit on psychoanalysis. There are the two books, *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, a somewhat sketchy popularization of some of Jung's basic concepts, *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, of which more in a moment, the reviews of Trigant Burrow's book, and miscellaneous remarks scattered through the correspondence and reviews. This is all of the greatest importance to the understanding of Lawrence.

Fantasia of the Unconscious is an extraordinary book. It is foully written, unquestionably Lawrence's worst writing, but it is certainly a landmark in the history of psychoanalysis. It is an attempt to combine the empirical neurology of Kundalini Yoga with his own interpretation of Jung's psychology, and with a theory of sexuality which may be either his own, or derived from popular, occultist, expositions of certain Gnostic sects and rumours of the practices of Shakti-Yoga. When it appeared, it must have seemed like pure fantasy of the Lost Atlantis variety. Jung's *Secret of the Golden Flower*, and his studies of "spiritual alchemy" lay in the future, Wilhelm Reich was unheard of. It is all there, in Lawrence's inspired guesses. The white race is going mad, but it is the autonomic nervous system which is out of

kilter, what goes on in the head is secondary, and the autonomic nervous system is, as a whole, the organ of communion.

To return to the poems. There is an hallucinatory quality in the images of the poems which precede Frieda which it is interesting to compare with the induced hallucination of H.D. The conflict in H.D. is hidden in herself. It is still there to this day, although her latest prose work has been the journal of a Freudian analysis. Her images are purified conflict ("Your poetry is not pure, eternal, sublimated," she told Lawrence), then the intensity which has been distilled from the sublimation of conflict is applied from the outside. What results is a puzzling hallucination of fact, a contentless mood which seems to reflect something tremendously important, but whose mystery always retreats before analysis.

Lawrence's early poems are poems of conflict. The images are always polarized. The antagonisms are struggling towards the light. The conflict yields to insight, if not to analysis. It is like the propadeutic symbolism of the dream, as contrasted to the trackless labyrinths of falsification which form the real patterns of most waking lives. The hallucination is real, the vision of the interior, personal oracle. Its utterance has meaning, more meaning than ordinary waking reality because the subjective is seen in the objective, emerging from it, the dream from the reality — not dislocated or applied from outside the context.

The poems of *Look We have Come Through* fall into three groups. There are the structurally more conventional pieces, like *Moonrise,* which sounds a little like Masefield's sonnets, though it is incomparably finer, and the *Hymn to Priapus,* and the others— they are all probably earlier, and have already been dicussed. There are the poems of the *Rhine Journey, December Night, New Year's Eve, Coming Awake, History,* all the great erotic epigrams, intense as Meleager, more wise than Paul the Silentiary. Lawrence was still a young man, and had many great poems to write—but put these beside the few poets who have survived from that day, Sturge Moore, Monro, De La Mare, they look like pigmies. Only Yeats stands up against Lawrence. And last, there are the Whitmanic, free verse manifestoes, "explaining" marriage to a people who had forgotten what it was.

With Frieda the sleeper wakes, the man walks free, the "child" of the alchemists is born. Reality is totally valued, and passes beyond the possibility of hallucination. The clarity of purposively realized objectivity is the most supernatural of all visions. Bad poetry always suffers from the same defects, synthetic hallucination and artifice. It is, as Lawrence calls it, "made up", or it "acts up". Invention is not poetry. Invention is defense, the projection of pseudopods out of the ego to ward off the other. Poetry is vision, the pure act of sensual communion and contemplation.

That is why the poems of Lawrence and Frieda on their Rhine Journey are such great poetry. That is why they are also the greatest imagist poems ever written. Reality streams through the body of Frieda, through everything she touches, every place she steps, valued

absolutely, totally, beyond time and place, in the minute particular. The swinging of her breasts as she stoops in the bath, the roses, the deer, the harvesters, the hissing of the glacier water in the steep river. Everything stands out, lit by a light not of this earth and at the same time completely of this earth, the light of the Holy Sacrament of Marriage, whose source is the wedded body of the bride.

The accuracy of Lawrence's observation haunts the mind permanently. I have never stood beside a glacier river, at just that relative elevation, and just that pitch, with just that depth of swift water moving over a cobbled bed, without hearing again the specific hiss of Lawrence's Isar. These poems may not be sublimated (whatever YMCA evasion that may refer to) but they are certainly pure and eternal.

Again, it is fruitful to compare the Rhine Journey with the only other poems of our time which resemble them much, Ford Madox Ford's *Buckshee.* Ford was writing about something very akin to what Lawrence was, about an aspect of marriage. But he was writing about its impossibility, about how life has bled away its possibility from both him and his girl, and how they had taken, in middle age, and in the long Mediterranean drouth, the next best thing, intense erotic friendship. And about how, every once in a while, marriage comes, and looks in at the window. The contrast with Lawrence and Frieda, sinking into the twilight in the fuming marsh by the Isar. "where the snake disposes", is pathetic past words.

Ford's *L'Oubli-Temps de Secheresse* and Lawrence's *River Roses* and *Quite Forsaken* are things of a kind and the best of their kind, but like the north and south poles, there is all the difference in the world between them. There is more communion in Frieda's temporary absence than in the closest possible kiss "under the catalpa tree, where the strange birds, driven north by the drouth, cry with their human voices" "Singular birds, with their portentous, singular flight and human voices" says Ford. This is the Persephone of *Blue Gentians* and the Orphic birds which flutter around the dying who are withdrawing themselves, corpuscle by corpuscle, from communion. Lawrence would come there one day, with the dark blue flowers on the medicine table and Frieda sleeping in a chair beside him, but he was on the other side of the universe then—the early summer of 1912, in the Isartal, the snow leaving the mountains.

After the Rhine Journey came the poems of struggle for a living adjustment. The ceremonial glory of the sacrament passes from the forefront of consciousness, and the period of adjustment to the background of life begins. Every detail of life must be transformed by marriage. This means creative conflict on the most important level.

Sacramental communion is bound by time. Mass does not last forever. Eventually the communicant must leave the altar, and digest the wafer, the body and blood must enter his own flesh, as it moves through the world, and struggles with the devil. The problem lies in the sympathetic nervous system, says Lawrence. And it is not easy for two members of a deranged race, in the twentieth century, to learn again how to make those webs mesh as they should.

Some of these poems are, in a sense, Frieda's records of her own interior conquest. It is amazing how much they accomplished, these two. To-day, revisiting this battlefield between love and hate that is so carefully mapped in certain of the poems, it is like Gettysburg, a sleepy, pastoral landscape, dotted with monuments and graves. Only maimed women and frightened men are Suffragettes any more. Hedda Gabbler is dead, or lurks in the suburbs. We should be grateful to Frieda. It was she who gave the dragon its death blow, and the Animus no longer prowls the polls and bedrooms, seeking whom it may devour.

The Whitmanic poems seem to owe a good deal to *Children of Adam* and *Calamus*. They look like Whitman on the page. But if read aloud with any sort of ear, they don't sound much like him. Whitman flourished in the oratorical context of 19th century America. He isn't rhetorical in the invidious sense, that it, there is nothing covert or coercive about him. He says what he means, but he says it in the language of that lost art of Elocution, so popular in his day. There is little of this in Lawrence. At this period, his long lined free verse is derived almost entirely from the poetry of the Bible, the Psalms, the song of Deborah, the song of Hezekiah, of Moses, the Bendicate, the Magnificat, the Nunc Dimittis. All the devices of Hebrew poetry are there, and in addition, the peculiar, very civilised, self-conscious, "sympathetic" poetry of St. Luke—those poems which have made his the "women's Gospel" especially, and which all good Englishmen must learn in childhood, as part of the Morning and Evening Prayer of the Church.

In *Look We Have Come Through,* Lawrence was just beginning to learn to write free verse. I don't think some of the poems are completely successful. They are diffuse and long-winded. He tries to say too much, and all at the same pitch of intensity, there are no crises, no points of reference. On the whole, the most successful is *New Heaven and Earth.* It may not be a perfect object of art, but it is a profound exhortation.

Beyond Holy Matrimony lies the newly valued world of birds, beasts and flowers, a sacramentalized, objective world. "Look, we have come through"—to a transformed world, with a glory around it everywhere like ground lightning. *Birds, Beasts, and Flowers* has the same supernatural lustre that shines through the figures of men and animals and things busy being part of a new redeemed world, as they are found, carved around the mandala of the Blessed Virgin above some cathedral door, or on some rose window.

Birds, Beasts, and Flowers is the mature Lawrence, in complete control of his medium, or completely controlled by his demon. He never has any trouble. He can say exactly what he wants to say. Except for the death poems, he would never write better. (And, too, after this, he would never be well again.) He seems to have lived in a state of total realization—the will and its power, positive and negative, at maximum charge, and all the universe streaming between them, glowing and transformed. The work of art grows in that electric field—is a "function" of it. It is the act of devotion in the

worshipper that forces the god to occupy the statue. It is the act of devotion in the sculptor that forces the god to occupy the stone, which the artist then pares to his invisible limbs—tailors, like cloth. It is never theology in the first, it is never aesthetics, or any teachable craft in the second. The craft is the vision and the vision is the craft.

Good cadenced verse is the most difficult of all to write. Any falsity, any pose, any corruption, any ineptitude, any vulgarity, shows up immediately. In this it is like abstract painting. A painting by Mondrian may look impersonal enough to be reduced to code and sent by telegraph. Maybe. But it offers no refuge, no garment, no mask, no ambush, for the person. The painter must stand there naked, as Adam under the eye of God. Only very great or very trivial personalities dare to expose themselves so.

Think of a few typical writers of cadenced verse, Whitman, Sandburg, F. M. Ford, F. S. Flint, Aldington, Lola Ridege, and Oppenheim! (H.D.'s verse is primarily a counterpointing of accentual and quantitative rhythms in patterns of Greek derivation. Pound's verse is Latin in reference, and usually quantitative.) How the faults stand out! Every little weakness is revealed with glaring cruelty. Whitman's tiresome posturing, Sandburg's mawkishness, Aldington's erotic sentimentality, the over-reaching ambition of Lola Ridege and Oppenheim, what a lot of sore thumbs standing out. Yet in many ways, some of these are good poets, and Whitman is a very great one.

Flint and Ford were never dishonest, never over-reached themselves, did their best to say what they meant and no more, never bargained with art. "The sentimentalist," says Daedulus, "is he who would enjoy, without incurring the immense debtorship for a thing done." Ford and Flint are not prophets, but they are good poets because they rendered a strict accounting with their own souls.

Sentimentality is spiritual realization on the instalment plan. Socially viable patterns, like conventional verse, are a sort of underwriting or amortization of the weaknesses of the individual. This is the kernel of sense in the hollow snobbery of Valery. The sonnet or quatrain are like the national debt, devices for postponing the day of reckoning indefinitely. All artistic conventions are a method of spiritual deficit financing. If they were abandoned, the entire structure credit of Poets Ltd., would be thrown into hopeless confusion. It is just as well that the professors have led the young, in my lifetime, away from free verse to something that can be taught. No one could be taught to be Lawrence, but in a world where the led lead the leaders, those who might pretend to do so, are sure to be confidence men.

Lawrence's free verse in *Birds, Beasts, and Flowers* is amongst the small best ever written. It can be analysed, but the paradigms produced by the analysis are worthless. It cannot be explained away—demonstrated in a mathematical sense. Neither, certainly, can any other great poetry; but at least a convincing illusion can be created and the young can be provided with something to practice. A poem like *Bats*, or the *Lion of St. Mark*, moves with a stately, gripping sonority through the most complex symphonic evolutions. The music

is a pattern of vibration caught from the resonant tone of Lawrence himself. The concerto is not on the page, little spots with flags and tails on a stave, but the living thing, evolving from the flesh of the virtuoso. It is like Gregorian chant or Hindu music, one thing when sung at Solesmes, or in the ruins of Konarak, another when "rendered" by the Progressive Choral Group, or at a concert of the Vedanta Society of Los Angeles.

Again, the faults of *Birds, Beasts, and Flowers,* are the excess of virtue. Lawrence found it hard to keep from being long-winded. Anyone who knows he has something intensely important to say, does. I think a good deal of his over-eager expansiveness and repetition is due to his methods of composition.

Some poets meditate in stillness and inactivity, as far away as possible from the creative act. We know that Baudelaire and T. S. Eliot, by their own testimony, spent long periods of time quiescent, inert as artists, turning over and over the substance of vision within themselves. Sometimes, as in Baudelaire, this process is extremely painful, a true desert of the soul. Months went by in which the paper and pen were red hot, it was impossible for him to read, his whole personality seemed engulfed in a burning neurasthenia. And then there would come a period of peace, and slowly growing exaltation, and finally the creative act—almost somnambulistic in its completion. Actual composition by this sort of personality tends to be rare, and usually as perfect as talent permits.

Lawrence meditated pen in hand. His contemplation was always active, flowing out in a continuous stream of creativity, which he seemed to have been able to open practically every day. He seldom reversed himself, seldom went back to re-work the same manuscript. Instead, he would lay aside a work that dissatisfied him, and re-write it all from the beginning. In his poetry, he would move about a theme, enveloping it in constantly growing spheres of significance. It is the old antithesis, centrifugal versus centripetal, Parmenides versus Heraclitus. He kept several manuscript books of his verse, and whenever he wanted to publish a collection, he would go through them and pick out a poem here and there, the ones he considered had best handled their given themes. Behind each poem was usually a group of others devoted to the same material. His selection was always personal, and sometimes it was not very "artistic". *Nettles,* for instance, is a selection of what are, by any standard, the poorer poems of the collections of epigrams printed in *Last Poems.*

There are those who think these epigrams, P*ansies,* and those in *Last Poems,* aren't art. This opinion is due to a singular provincialism. It is true that due to the reasons just mentioned, they aren't all successful, but they belong to a tradition, are members of a species, which has produced some of the greatest poetry. Epigram or maxim, Martial or La Rouchefoucauld, the foundations of this tradition are far more stable than those of the Neo-metaphysical poetry produced, with seven ambiguities carefully inserted in every line, by unhappy dons, between wars.

Any bright young man can be taught to be artful. It is impossible

to teach taste, but you can teach most anybody caution. It is always the lesser artists who are artful, they must learn their trade by rote. They must be careful never to make a false step, never to speak out of a carefully synthesised character. The greatest poetry is nobly dishevelled. At least, it never shows the scars of taking care. "Would he had blotted a thousand lines," said Ben Jonson of Shakespeare. Which thousand? Lawrence was always mislaying those Mss. books of poetry and writing around the world for them, just as Cezanne left his paintings in the fields. Not for any stupid reason—that they weren't Perfect Works of Art—but simply because he forgot.

Eliot, who does not write that way, writing of Pound's epigrams, points out that the major poet, unlike the minor, is always writing about everything imaginable, and so, is in good form for the great poem when it comes. Practice makes perfect, and those who wait for the perfect poem before putting pen to paper may wait mute for ever. I suppose it is the absolutism which has swept over popular taste in the wake of Cubism, which has encouraged the ignorant to expect a canzone of Dante's in each issue of their favourite little magazine, a School of Athens in every WPA mural. This is just greediness, like children who want it to be Christmas every day. And it produces an empty, pretentious, greedy art. Meanwhile, Pound's *Les Millwins* and Lawrence's Willy-Wet-Legs quietly preempt immortality, a state of being only rarely grandiose.

As far as I know, the poems in the *Plumed Serpent* have never been printed separately. This book is one of the most important (he thought it the most important) Lawrence ever wrote. It has brought forth all sorts of pointless debate. People are always saying, "Well, I have lived in Mexico for years and it simply isn't like that." Lawrence was not an idiot. He knew it wasn't. And in the first chapter, he gave a very accurate and pitiful picture of the "real" Mexico, sterile, subcolonial, brutal, with the old gods gone, and the church gone, and the revolution a swindle, and nothing left but a squalid imitation of Ashtabula, Ohio. And he knew the other side, too, the pasty frigid nymphomaniacs, the deranged women of Europe and America, who consider themselves disciples of Lawrence and prowl the earth seeking Dark Gods to take to bed. He wrote a story which should have destroyed them forever—*None of That.* It should be read with the *Plumed Serpent.*

Every year there is less, but in Lawrence's day there was still something of the primeval Mexico left, at the great feast at Oaxaca, in the life of the peasants in the remote villages, in the Indian communities in the back country. Lawrence did not make any very definite contact with the ancient Mexico, but he could see and sense it, and he was fresh from a much less touched primitive world, that of the Navaho and Pueblo Indians of the South-West. His materials were not as abundant as they might have been, but they were enough to build a book of ritual, of the possible that would never be, of potentialities that would never emerge. It is a book of ceremonial prophecy, but prophecy uttered in the foreknowledge it would never be fulfilled.

The re-awakening of mystery, the revival of the old Aztec religion,

the political "Indianism", even if it all came true, one knows it would be a fraud, a politician's device, as Indianism is in Latin America to-day. Lawrence knew that, of course, and so the book is dogged with tragedy. One constantly expects the characters to go out in a blazing Gotterdammerung in some dispute with the police, like a gangster movie. They don't, but maybe it would have been better if they had, for eventually they tire, they seem to become secretly aware that all this gorgeous parading around in primitive millinery, this Mystery, and Fire, and Blood, and Darkness, has been thought up. There is something Western European, British Museum, about it. The protagonist, Kate, submits to her lover's insistent Mystery, but rather out of ennui and loathing of Europe than out of any conviction, and one feels that the book could have no sequel, or only a sequel of disintegration, like *Women in Love*.

Still, in the middle of the book, before the fervour dies out, Lawrence wrote, as nearly as he could, what he believed *should* be. If the religion of Cipriano and Ramon is taken as an other-worldy system of values, it is profound, and true, and due to the freshness of its symbols, tremendously exciting. Also, it differs very little from any other religion that has maintained its contacts with its sources. Ramon and Cipriano short-circuit themselves where Christianity was short-circuited by Constantine, in the desire to have both worlds, to found a political religion—a Church. That, if any, is the "message" of the book.

The mystery survives in the poems, just as sacraments survived Constantine. They are not the greatest poems Lawrence ever wrote, but they are amongst the most explicit. This is Lawrence's religion. Wherever he found it, he is now in complete possession of a kind of orthodoxy, the orthodoxy of the heterodox, the symbolic world of the Gnostics, the occultists, Tantrism, of Jung, for that matter. In a sense they are failures, these poems, in the way that the Indian songs published by the United States Bureau of Ethnology are not failures. But, again, this is the message of the book. Finally, you discover that you cannot make up paganism. What you make up is a cult. There is nothing primitive about Gnosticism, any more than there is anything primitive about Theosophy. It was the creation of over-civilized Hellenistic intellectuals. Tantrism too, grew up in India, in Buddhism and Hinduism, when civilization was exhausting itself. Jung comes, with Lawrence, at the end of the career of Western European man. Lawrence, after all, was a contemporary of Niels Bohr and Picasso. And so his poems are mystical poems, and the Aztecs were not mystics, they were just Aztecs. This doesn't invalidate the poems. They have very little to do with ancient, or modern, Mexico, but they do express, very well, the personal religion of D. H. Lawrence. They may be full of "occult lore", but behind the machinery is an intense, direct, personal, mystical apprehension of reality.

In the last hours, Lawrence seems to have lived in a state of suspended animation, removed from the earth, floating, transfigured by the onset of death. Poems like *Adraitix* and *Pomegranate Flowers* have an abstracted, disinterested intensity, as though they were written

by a being from another planet. Others are short mystical apothegms. There is no millinery any more, no occultism, they differ only in their modern idiom from any and all the great mystics. And finally, there are the two death poems, *Bavarian Gentians* and *The Ship of Death.* Each was written over several times. There exists a variant which can be taken as a final, or pre-final, of *Bavarian Gentians,* but both are clusters of poems rather than finished products.

The Ship of Death material alone would make a small book of meditations, a contemporary *Holy Dying.* It is curious to think that once such a book would have been a favourite gift for the hopelessly ill. To-day, people die in hospitals, badgered by nurses, stupefied with barbiturates or morphine. This is not an age in which a "good death" is a desired end of life.

All men have to die, and one would think a sane man would want to take that fact into account, at least a little. But our whole civilization is a conspiracy to pretend that it isn't going to happen, and in an age when death has become more horrible, more senseless, less at the will of the individual, than ever before. Modern man is terribly afraid, of sex, of pain, of evil, of death. To-day childbirth, the ultimate orgiastic experience, has been reduced to a meaningless dream, dentists insist on injecting novocaine before they clean your teeth, the agonies of life have retreated to the source of life. Men and women torture each other to death in the bedroom, just as the dying dinosaurs gnawed each other, as they copulated in the chilling marshes. Anything but the facts of life. To-day, you can take a doctor's degree in medicine or engineering, and never learn how to have intercourse with a woman or repair a car. Human self-alienation, Marx called it. He said that was all that was really wrong with capitalism. "Let us live and lie reclined" in a jet-propelled, streamlined, air-cooled, lucite incubator. When we show signs of waking, another cocktail instead of the Wine of God. When we try to break out, flagellation and psychoanalysis instead of Holy Matrimony. When the machinery runs down, morphine for Extreme Unction.

In a world where death had become a nasty, pervasive secret like defecation or masturbation, Lawrence reinstated it in all its grandeur—the oldest and most powerful of the gods. *The Ship of Death* poems have an exaltation, a nobility, a steadiness, an insousiance, which is not only not of this time, but which is rare in any time. It doesn't matter who—Jeremy Taylor, the Orphic Hymns, the ancient Egyptians —nobody said it better. And there is one aspect of *The Ship of Death* which is unique, Lawrence did not try to mislead himself with false promises, imaginary guarantees. Death is the absolute, unbreakable mystery. Communion and oblivion, sex and death, the mystery can be revealed, but it can be revealed only as totally inexplicable. Lawrence never succumbed to the temptation to try to do more. He succeeded in what he did do.

Herbert Read

Chains of Freedom (II)

17. "Equality," wrote Nietzsche, "as an actual approximation to similarity, of which the theory of equal rights is but the expression, belongs essentially to decadence. The gap between man and man, between class and class, the multiplicity of types, the will to assert the self, to stand out in contrast, that which I call the *pathos of distance*, belongs to every vigorous period:"

There is, of course, an inescapable truth in such criticism: equality, in democratic theory and practice, has too often been identified with a policy of *levelling*. The natural diversity of needs, or merits, of capabilities, has been ignored, and men have been forced into common moulds, fixed routines, standard patterns of all kinds. Not only their bodies, but the minds and sensibilities of men, have been *conscripted* by the State, and all in the name of democratic justice. This democratic tendency, as Nietzsche perceived, conflicts with the essential nature of freedom, and Nietzsche could not see how freedom was to be reconciled with equality in the democratic State. Nor can I. But freedom is another concept which had to be redefined by Nietzsche, and the more he considered it, the more clearly he realized that freedom is not something which one has by natural endowment, or by social contract: it is something which one wins by conquest, by a discipline of the spirit. *Freedom is the will to be responsible for one's self.*

18. Freedom can be defined logically, psychologically, even metaphysically, but equality can be defined only in a sociological sense. Even if we fall back on the escapist technique of the Christians and say that we are all equal in the sight of God, we are still defining a social relationship with reference to a point outside society—erecting a triangle on a social basis. But the base of the triangle is *level*: and the Christian, in politics, must inevitably be a Leveller.

19. But let us look a little closer at the escapist technique—in Kierkegaard, for example: "The neighbour is your equal. The neighbour is not your beloved for whom you have a passionate partiality. Nor, if you are an educated man, is your neighbour the one who is educated, with whom you are equal in education—for with your neighbour you have human equality before God. Nor is the neighbour the one who is more distinguished than yourself, that is, he is not your neighbour just because he is more distinguished than yourself, for loving him because he is more distinguished can easily become partiality, and insofar selfishness. Nor is your neighbour one who is inferior to you, that is, insofar as he is humbler than yourself he is not your neighbour, for to love one because he is inferior to yourself can readily become the condescension of partiality, and insofar selfishness. No, loving your neighbour is a matter of equality. It

is encouraging in your relation to a distinguished man, that in him you *must love* your neighbour; it is humbling in relation to the inferior, that you do not have to love the inferior in him, but *must* love your neighbour; it is a saving grace if you do it, for you *must* do it. The neighbour is every man; for he is not your neighbour through the difference, or through the equality with you as in your difference from other men. He is your neighbour through equality with you before God, but every man unconditionally has this equality, and has it unconditionally."
Works of Love, II. B. (trans. D. F. & L. M. Swenson, Oxford, 1946).

20. This argument seems to imply double-dealing on the part of God. Equality before God apparently does not guarantee equality with your neighbour, and the notion, which Nietzsche and Burckhardt held, that the democratic movement is the inheritance of the Christian movement, is therefore based on a false interpretation of Christ's second commandment. For Kierkegaard, as for Nietzsche, "differences" are inborn. "As little as the Christian lives or can live without a physical body, just as little can he live outside the differences of earthly life to which every individual by birth, by condition, by circumstances, by education, etc., belongs . . . These differences must continue as long as the temporal existence continues, and must continue to tempt every man who comes into the world." *Innerlichkeit*, whether of the Kierkegaardian pattern, or of the Californian Yogi pattern, offers a complete escape from social responsibility.

21. In a society where the preservation *of the community* is the first consideration, love of one's neighbour, as Nietzsche once again pointed out, is a secondary matter. "A sympathetic action, for instance, is called neither good nor bad, moral not immoral, in the best period of the Romans; and should it be praised, a sort of resentful disdain is compatible with this praise, even at the best, directly the sympathetic action is compared with one which contributes to the welfare of the whole, to the *res publica.*" (*Beyond Good and Evil,* § 201.)

22. Nietzsche makes no distinction between a totalitarian society (which is welded together by external bonds) and a community society which coheres by virtue of its internal morale, by instinctive mutual aid. The possibility of such an instinct as mutual aid is foreign to his false Darwinism, his conception of evolution as a blind struggle for existence, a manifestation of some universal "will to power". Obviously, if evolution is nothing but such a struggle, we must *fear* our neighbour rather than love him, and as a matter of fact Nietzsche had no difficulty in pointing out that fear is the mother of bourgeoise morality. "It is by the loftiest and strongest instincts when they break out passionately and carry the individual far above and beyond the average, and the low level of the gregarious conscience, that the self-reliance of the community is destroyed; its belief in itself, its back-bone, as it were, breaks; consequently these very instincts will be most branded and defamed. The lofty independent spirituality, the will to stand alone, and even the cogent reason, are felt to be dangers;

everything that elevates the individual above the herd, and is a source of fear to the neighbour, is henceforth called *evil;* the tolerant, unassuming, self-adapting, self-equalising disposition, the *mediocrity* of desires, attains to moral distinction and honour." (*Loc. cit.*)

23. It is useless to pretend that a dilemma does not exist here. The growth of democracy and of egalitarian socialism has led to the prevalence and predominance of mediocre men in public life. Our present House of Commons descends below mediocrity to some absolute zero of vulgarity and ineptitude. The House of Commonness, it might be called. I say this remembering all that Bagehot said in defence of stupidity in high places. But the modern politician is not stupid; he is grotesque. It is not fair to see in this type a final product of the movement which produced St. Augustine, Pascal and Kierkegaard.

24. It is obvious that Kierkegaard and Nietzsche could be reconciled, for both believe in an inward relationship to transcendental values in which the individual is oblivious to the social situation. They differ profoundly in how they interpret this relationship, but they were both personalists, and not, in the literal sense of the word, socialists. It is not without significance that some of Nietzsche's best commentators have been Christians (Figgis, Maulnier, Copleston, etc.).

25. Equality is a very ambiguous word. There are at least three distinct contexts in which it can be used: the economic, the functional, the intellectual—and four if we include the spiritual (and I think we should, in the sense implied by Bagehot in the quotation I will give in the next paragraph). We cannot legislate for spiritual and intellectual equality, though we might increase the ratio of these qualities in a community by controlled mating. Functional inequality is inevitable in any but the most primitive nomadic communities, but function need not confer differential status—the Elders in a Hutterite community have no special privileges, though the Preacher, who is head of the community, may have the right to the greater degree of seclusion which his duties require. Inequality of intellect or function cannot be avoided, and they only become vicious when allied to economic inequality. And this is the crux of the whole matter, the crossroads where socialism in general takes the wrong turning. For the essential thing is not to make all incomes equal—the ideal of the average democratic socialist—but to abolish all incomes and *hold all things in common.* This principle was the foundation of the early Christian communities. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things in common . . . Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."

It is essential to stress the radical nature of this distinction between equal partition, and community of ownership. It is the distinction between false communism and true communism, between the totalitarian conception of the State as a controlled herd, and the libertarian conception of society as a brotherhood. Once this conception is fully realised, the ambiguities of the doctrine of equality disappear: the concept of equality is dissolved in the concept of community.

It will, of course, be said that such a conception of brotherhood is superhuman—that it could never be realised in this imperfect world. The first Hutterite colonies were founded in 1526, and in spite of four centuries of persecution and enforced migration, *they still exist.* Indeed, we might claim that they have proved themselves to be the most stable forms of social organization ever devised by man. No other social system can boast such an undeviating record of stability and self-sufficiency—certainly not our modern democratic systems. But the conception must be *fully realized*: there are no degrees of communal living.

26. Bagehot wrote (in his essay on "The First Edinburgh Reviewers"): "A clear, precise, discriminating intellect shrinks at once from the symbolic, the unbounded, the definite. The misfortune is that mysticism is true. There certainly are kinds of truth, borne in as it were instinctively on the human intellect, most influential on the character and the heart, yet hardly capable of stringent statement, difficult to limit by an elaborate definition. Their course is shadowy; the mind seems rather to have seen than to see them, more to feel after than definitely apprehend them. They commonly involve an indefinite element which, of course, cannot be stated precisely, or else a first principle—and original tendency—of our intellectual constitution, which it is impossible not to feel, and yet which it is hard to extricate in terms and words. Of this latter kind is what has been called the religion of nature, or more exactly, perhaps, the religion of the imagination."

72. *Ni dieu ni maître*, cries the doctrinaire socialist. The mind which rejects the notion of a social hierarchy tends at the same time to reject the notion of a spiritual hierarchy, and therefore to deny, not only the existence of God, but even a religion of the imagination. This can be excused in a thorough-going Marxian materialist, but it is difficult to see where the Christian democrat finds his logical footing. A Christian anarchist, like Eric Gill, is conceivable, as is a Christian royalist like T. S. Eliot. One derives from St. Peter, the other from St. Paul. The Christian democrat, however, is among those who "tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God", who "love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets", who "are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them."

28. Equality in its democratic usage is partitive, and a denial of brotherhood, of communion, of true communism. The democratic state

is a house divided (though equally) against itself. It is impossible to divide what is held in common.

Equality is a materialist measure—a balance of weights.

Nature knows symmetry, but not equality—the equal parts in nature are always joined together.

28. The sociologists are slowly beginning to distinguish between two types of co-operation, one which they call "segmental" or "partial", the other "comprehensive" or "integral". "In segmental co-operation the members associate to satisfy *like* interests. This is the type found in consumers', producers', marketing and processing co-operatives, all organized for the better attainment of specified economic ends. Comprehensive co-operation is based upon *common* interests . . . Comprehensive co-operation is practised in a community when all the essential interests of life are satisfied in a co-operative way." (H. F. Infield: *Co-operative Living in Palestine*. London (Kegan Paul), 1946, p. 3.)

30. We should not be afraid to use the word "brotherhood" (instead of pseudo-scientific terms like "integral co-operation") simply because it has sentimental associations. It indicates the necessary physical (sensational) basis of the relationship in co-operative living. Brotherhood is a concrete existential bond; alternative words are conceptual and evasive. Trigant Burrow has something difficult but pertinent to say on this subject: "The originally total, organic sense of wholeness, co-ordination and fitness, or the basic rightness that is common and consistent thoughout all organisms of the species has been shifted to a mere social image of wholeness or rightness. This shift has been accompanied by a phenomenon of behaviour whereby the isolated, separated individual has been vested with pseudo-authority or proprietary 'right'. Right is *his* right. It is his private possession. Inevitably this over-accentuation of the symbol or the outer appearance of right has ultimated in conflicts and disorder within the individual that have their reaction-counterpart in mere peripheral, symbolic representations of unity, harmony or wholeness in the social community.

"Under these conditions it is not surprising that there exists socially the hodge-podge of inter-individual relationships, of misunderstandings, of contradictory feelings and impressions, of love in the form of mere ownership, of jealousies, petty competitions, proprietary affections and equally proprietary aversions. It is not surprising that there are the constant incentives at one time to dictatorship, at another to servility, with all the irritation and disaffection which we not only see but which we ourselves feel subjectively both as individuals and as nations. With this basic miscarriage of function within the primary organism it becomes clear why we have such monstrous disfigurements of feeling and thinking as exist in our various social and political dogmas and creeds. It becomes clear why there lurks beneath our programmes of socialism and a wider brotherhood a secret assertion that characterizes the most blatant of our monarchical or obligarchical régimes. Nor is it surprising that, as a result of this primary dis-

sociation, we have in the community widely disseminated and rapidly growing principles of communism which, though dynamically active, belong to a purely verbal, symbolic system of behaviour, and that upon analysis these principles indicate as violent an intolerance toward a physiological basis of community feeling and accord as may be found in the most enthusiastic advocates of our prevailing capitalistic systems." *The Biology of Human Conflict.* New York (Macmillan), 1937, pp. 93-4.

31. In this same context Burrow makes an acute criticism of Kropotkin. After pointing out that the first portion of *Mutual Aid* "gives an excellent account of the principle of organic consistency uniting and motivating the individuals of an animal species into an integral organism while", he expresses the opinion that the second half of Kropotkin's book "distinctly falls away in its artificial attempt to relate this biological principle of unity evidenced in animals to the quite sentimental and self-conscious expressions of 'unity' that characterize civilized communities of men. In the author's effort to affiliate our widely systematized charities or the helpful community services of the social worker with the manifestations of this biological principle of mutual aid, his thesis is largely vitiated." (*Op. cit.,* p. 64.)

I agree that many of the examples of "mutual aid among ourselves" which Kropotkin gives in his last two chapters are examples of partial sympathy rather than of biological unity, but Kropotkin nevertheless was on the right track, as Dr. Burrow would have discovered had he pursued his researches into the "little known work" of this author a little further. For example, in his *Ethics* he makes it quite clear that mutual aid, which is the biological principle of unity, precedes and conditions all further stages of group organization—that without this basic, organismic wholeness, concepts like justice and morality are worthless superstructures. For example: *"Mutual Aid—Justice—Morality* are thus the consecutive steps of an ascending series, revealed to us by the study of the animal world and man. They constitute an *organic necessity* which carries in itself its own justification, confirmed by the whole of the evolution of the animal kingdom, beginning with its earliest stages (in the form of colonies of the most primitive organisms), and gradually rising to our civilized human communities. Figuratively speaking, it is a *universal law of organic evolution,* and this is why the sense of Mutual Aid, Justice, and Morality are rooted in man's mind with all the force of an inborn instinct—the first instinct, that of Mutual Aid, being evidently the strongest, while the third, developed later than the others, is an unstable feeling and the least imperative of the three."

32. There is a profound understanding of the political implications of "brotherhood" in William Blake, as Middleton Murry has shown in his book on the poet. According to Blake, religion is brotherhood, and brotherhood is politics, and the way of brotherhood lies through the "terrors of self-annihilation".

(*To be continued.*)

Louis Adeane

Vision and Image

HERBERT READ: COLLECTED POEMS. Faber, 8/6.
R. S. THOMAS: THE STONES OF THE FIELD. Druid Press, 6/-.
DENISE LEVERTOFF: THE DOUBLE IMAGE. Cresset Press, 5/-.
ALEX COMFORT: THE SIGNAL TO ENGAGE. Routledge, 5/-.
GEORGE SIMS: THE IMMANENT GODDESS. Fortune Press, 5/-.
NORMAN MCCAIG: THE INWARD EYE. Routledge, 5/-.
E. J. SCOVELL: MIDSUMMER MEADOW. Routledge, 5/-.
STEPHEN SPENDER: POEMS OF DEDICATION. Faber, 6/-.

Except for a few early poems, Mr. Read's book gathers together all the work he has published in the last thirty-three years. Varied though it is, this assembly does permit one a few general reflections; as it is certain of a posterity, his poetry may safely be left to the future for fuller and surer judgment.

An observant eye, a clarified recollection; a subtle and speculative intellect: these, combined and qualified by a single sensibility, self-aware and ultimately self-consistent, a sensibility whose undertones and whose pastiche have been deliberate, neither accidental nor over-determined by the audience, have enabled Mr. Read to produce verse of a metaphysical intensity and scope, working always through a highly disciplined technique. This technique was derived from that of the Imagists, which of all the schools noisily celebrating the adolescence of the century, had the most permanent effect on English poetry. Mr. Read was not, I think, represented in *Des Imagistes,* edited by Ezra Pound in 1914, nor in the three annual Imagist anthologies that followed, but the use he makes of his technical equipment does suggest a belief that "emotions have their own peculiar cadences and that poetic ideas are best represented by the rendering of concrete objects", which according to Ford Madox Ford were the two main postulates of the Imagist creed.

Emotions have their own peculiar cadence:

I saw him stab
And stab again
A well-killed Boche.

This is the happy warrior,
This is he . . .

Poetic idea rendered through concrete objects:

Shrill green weeds
float on the black pond.

A rising fish
ripples the still water

And disturbs my soul.

The latter complete poem is, I suppose, technically perfect from an Imagist point of view. In it the particular illuminates the general without confusion; the condensed metaphor in the first line, at first sight unnecessary, actually emphasises the quiet stillness by contrast, like an inverted reflection in the water itself. This poem also exemplifies, it is worth noting, a perfect use of neo-Platonic symbolism.

In the less-restrained later poems this early discipline canalises the running-over line, stiffens the more sustained statement. On the rare occasions when Mr. Read abandons his Imagist training, the result is not very happy:

O that I might believe that time
Is but a measure thrown on things
That hold existence in a sphere
Intense alone, and always felt
In full reality! For then
I could evade despondency
By magnifying to my frame
The ecstatic beat that night and day
Pulses within the milk-white walls
Of mental sloth . . .

which, it seems to me, cannot easily be comprehended in the immediate way good poetry is comprehended. Yet it does imply a statement, a statement implicit in all Mr. Read's early work, made explicit in the later. Throughout the book he is:

eager to break
Into the radiant release
Of vision divine and precise

and elsewhere he says:

I would have my own vision
The world's vision:
The beauty settled in my mind
A lamp in a busy street

The vision is of beauty then, and indeed he implies in another poem that Reason looks out and sees Beauty. Like Shelley, Mr. Read is an anarchist standing between the reasoned order and the Platonic order; but Shelley made a distinction between the Reason as principle of analysis and the Imagination as principle of synthesis, and as I have tried to indicate above it is not by Shelley's Reason but by his creative use of the image (or Coleridge's image: "modified by a predominant passion . . . reducing multitude to unity . . . ") that Mr. Read conceives and conveys his vision to us. The innocent eye is an extremely sophisticated eye, seeing in the confusion of the apparent the clear Platonic proportions of the real. Mr. Read's anarchism, one feels, is stored up in heaven (a subjective heaven: *beauty settled in my mind*: to-day we call the Ideal Forms the archetypes), and he says in another book that it is a mystique, by which he means, I take it, that

it is a divine order immanent in man and capable of realisation. Hence the following:

Vision itself is desperate: the act
Is born of the ideal: the hand
Must seize the hovering grail.
The sense of glory stirs the heart
Out of its stillness: a white light
Is in the hills and the thin cry
Of a hunter's horn. We shall act
We shall build
A crystal city in the age of peace
Setting out from an island of calm
A limpid source of love.

Mr. Read's peculiar achievement as a poet is to have solved Shelley's problem, to have fused the urgency of the reasoned with the apprehension of the divine, to have brought act and ideal into the building of his crystal city. Because his technique is what it is, and because it continually implies an ordered, wide, and often directly Platonic field of reference, he may be called a metaphysical poet. All of which means that Mr. Read is by no means as equivocal an anarchist as some critics might suggest.

One interesting thing about his poetry (and about that of H.D. and the Imagists in general) is that despite the use of auditory enforcements (*One eye one leg one arm one lung/a syncopated sick heart-beat*) and occasional near-tactile images (*I saw him stab/and stab again*), his images are predominantly visual, his cadences usually intellectual in their compulsion. It is this that fines-down his work and renders his "John Donne Declines a Benefice", for instance, somewhat deliberate, a contortion of the intellect rather than a movement of muscle. This poem, and other of the same period, suggest that Mr. Read is not so much a Donne as a George Herbert without God. The Mr. Read who uses images in this way:

Take me: englobe my soul
And spin it on an axis;
Set about me ring'd planets
And diverse atmospheres

and who arranges sounds in this way:

But I have naught that will express
The grief I feel
When men and moods combine to show
The end of this—

is nearer the George Herbert who employs images and sounds in this way:

Yet through the labyrinths, not my grovelling wit,
But thy silk twist let down from heav'n to me
Did both conduct and teach me, how by it
To climb to thee.

than he is to John Donne. Mr. Read's wit is an intellectual one, his vision a mystical one, and his God is a systematised Beauty created or discovered by his innocent eye.

The last poem in this book, which by echoing a lyric by AE (*The children were laughing together/And running along the sands*), again suggests a neo-Platonic background, conveys a certain bitterness:

The children came running toward me

But I saw only the waves behind them
Cold, salt and disastrous
Lift their black banners and break
Endlessly, without resurrection.

The vision fails to bring happiness perhaps, but it does not fail to present Beauty, which is more important. Others may yet build the crystal city above that disastrous sea. Mr. Read has no cause to dissatisfaction, having solved so much, having offered so much, not the least of which are some poems that will take a permanent place in literature.

Mr. R. S. Thomas writes some good Imagist poetry, as in "Cyclamen":

They are white moths
With wings
Lifted
Over a dark water
In act to fly . . .

where the images chosen, their order, perfectly express the idea. It might be said that the idea is a single one and that this is not a poem but a metaphor. Without movement, it attempts to be a picture. The same could not be said of "Madrigal":

Your love is dead, lady, your love is dead;
Dribbles no sound
From his stopped lips, though swift underground
Spurts his wild hair

which seems to be disciplined by an Imagist technique, a technique that sustains far more elaborate poems such as "Strange Spring":

Long cloak to a lean land, the white flesh thaws thin,
And, bare as a sky, the wind-sucked bone shows blue;
The berried blood swells in the frosted vein,
The speckled eye hatches its silver brood
To bud with song the old, heart-echoing wood—
Such is the spring Time brings the body to.

One notes the echoes of Wilfred Owen, of Mr. Read, even of de la Mare, but in each case these echoes further Mr. Thomas' intention, amplifying the emotive impact of the words. There is hardly a poem in this book which is not successful. Sometimes perhaps, they seem too neat, too tidy: by which I mean that the rhythms are often obvious, the devices rather easy, and that, since the content is always admirably implicated in the form, this content must be slight. Frequently these poems seem too self-subsistent, failing to evoke a significance beyond the immediate experience of reading them. But if Mr. Thomas writes on a small scale, his accomplishment there is almost perfect. Some poems suggest that this first volume will be followed by poetry even more impressive.

The same may be said of another first book, by Denise Levertoff, though otherwise her work affords a sharp contrast to that of Mr. Thomas. Like sea-shells, her poems convey an incessant murmur of echoes from elsewhere (one can distinguish Auden, Yeats, Shelley, Eliot), echoes which tend to obscure rather than clarify the reader's response. Again, too often the work is enveloped in autumnal emotion, prompting pensive lines like: *saddens the hillside with a wise lament,* or: *and feverish words of once upon a time/assail their hearts with langour and with swans,* though sometimes this easy nostalgia is more aptly applied and has a genuine grace:

I walk through rooms that flower in fronds of smoke
bluer than moonlight; colour and darkness sway
like lovers in the mind, insatiable
beating their mortal wings upon the hours . . .

Then sometimes one feels that this poet has been too consciously loading every rift with ore, using a lantern whose midnight fumes drift across her pages and contribute to the general rather engaging haze: engaging, and distracting from the proper poetic object.

These inadequacies, however, are not of an important kind in a first volume of poetry; they are not of a kind to cramp further progress. I mention them only because they may lap the uncritical reader in irrelevant feeling, and because they may blind the purist reader to Miss Levertoff's very great talent; a talent expressed not merely in brilliant lines like: *and trees white with rage of alien battles* —evoking a whole hot exhausted landscape—but that successfully employs rhythms which are subtle and devices which are never easy, that triumphantly deploys a content of considerable variety and richness. Lines like these:

Out of autumn like a blade
mysteriously engraved, flashes the frost:
stars and leaves are blown to the brown earth
and burning distantly
encircle evening in a web of smoke

in which every metrical modulation serves to emphasise the sense; auditory complexities like these:

In fear of floods long quenched, waves fallen,
shattered mirrors darken with old cries;
where no shot sounds the frightened birds go flying

in which an almost tactile density is achieved as background to the meaning—so that the birds seem to fly out of bracken—such lines and complexities convey something of the subtlety and richness offered by this poet. None of her poems are faultless, but some do suggest that a harder directness, a more precise imagery, a more imaginative and less fanciful trapping of feeling, are implicit in this volume and will enable the poet to realise its promise.

The visual intensity I have noted in Read is also displayed in Alex Comfort's work. Perhaps one can trace the Imagist current here, which flowing by, washed the eyes of poets open while leaving their ears full of indefinite thunder. Springing from Pound, the stream seems to have descended through Eliot to the NEW VERSE

group, retaining a thin purity in the minor members, used as an essence by the less minor members, and coming muddily to an end in the rest. One wonders why the flood should have been narrowed (tearfully, too) to the visual image by so many poets of the Thirties. The early work of George Barker exemplifies very well a wider use of the "concrete object" for his images were auditory and tactile as often as they were visual. Did the restriction reflect the dominance of the visual sense in modern life? But more to the point, one observes that during this process working through the wasteland of our time, the consistent "poetic idea" has too often sunk to the stream's bed, leaving the "concrete object", washed and shining, on the banks. Thus returning downstream to the present day, one finds Comfort offering vivid images like: *the grave's white tangled dancers,* and: *all the portholes trail their oars of light,* whose power to convince immediately is due to the clarity with which they are seen and presented. All too often in Comfort's new book however, one regrets that Coleridge's statement: "Images . . . become proofs of original genius only in so far as they are modified by a predominant passion, or by associated thoughts and images awakened by that passion . . . " is not implied, that the metaphors are insufficiently related to a poetic idea expressed throughout the poem, that they fail to reveal to the reader any constant underlying significance. For instance there are these lines:

And we have come now to the edge of Time.
This is the quiet, moving scarf of night
touching the leaves, under whose pool we sit,
and one by one the garden flowers go out
following each other like children who go home
and every new year is like a well, a hollow
full of quiet water, without light
a rising plain of glass, and under it
the shadow of History falling. Once before it came
the shadow of a great hill . . .

and so on with valleys, slopes, stones, heat, sheep, a confused and contradictory collection of images dominated by the brilliant *and one by one the garden flowers go out,* which like lightning blinds the reader to the rest of the passage. The first four lines here are poetry of a high standard, I think, yet there seems to be a lack of consistent intellectual purpose or controlled passion, even a weak ability to judge the relative emotive intensities of words, that vitiates much of the work in this volume.

Comfort is a particularly interesting writer because he is both novelist and poet, a combination few writers have been able to sustain as successfully as he has done. Possibly however, we are witnessing with this volume a temporary abandonment of poetry. "From the quarrel with others we make rhetoric; from the quarrel with ourselves, poetry," said Yeats, and most of the pieces in this book express a quarrel of the former kind. It is a convincing rhetoric. Outstanding in the book is the "Song of Lazarus", which is really a collection of short poems strung on a single theme, ranging from a pleasant lyricism

to the quiet conversational bitterness of "Notes for my Son", an admirable piece of exhortation, as is "Song for the Heroes", in a different key, elsewhere in the volume. Few readers could fail to be stirred by "None but my Foe to be my Guide" or "Song for the Women of Every City", and I hope this book will find readers, so that as many people as possible will be stirred. Sincerity is an excellent basis for rhetoric, and Comfort succeeds in fusing his passionate indignation with his utterance: it is often magnificent, but not usually poetry. Disappointing as a fourth collection of poems, this book is valuable in other ways.

It is one thing for poetry to consistently express an idea; it is another for poetry to be written with the intellect. Mr. Sims tends to do the latter. I feel that his verse, with its calculated, clipped metrical devices, its too-literary echoes from the Metaphysicals (and there is sometimes more than an echo from Auden and Barker), misses its objective more often than not. Sometimes he achieves a moving line: *Effortless saunterers, the topless trees,* or:

Ah featherweight, windfall, my
Most deliberate threatener

but usually the alliteration and assonance seems contrived, the poetry stilled. There is an attractive tenacity and toughness here, but at the moment Mr. Sims seems to be a poet to watch, rather than one to read.

The generalisations made above about the visual image are sharply checked by Norman McCaig's second book of verse, reminding one immediately of Dylan Thomas and very remotely, of that Abel to Imagism's Cain, Surrealism. On the whole it is only a reminder, though very occasionally Thomas seems unassimilated as in:

On the garden grown thin on my back is walking rain
crying over and over the coloured cards of pain
and a weak girl sits there ravelling out a tune.

Of all the younger poets under review, Mr. McCaig is the most accomplished and covers the widest field. His poems are full, formed, and indicative of a world beyond the poem, giving the illusion that experience is charged with poetry rather than that experience is juggled with to make a poem. An unfriendly critic might say that he is a slick imitator of Thomas, turning out a smooth kitsch version of the rougher original. Certainly he seems sometimes too facile, as in a poem beginning: *One more poem, one little jig for April,* but usually it is not cleverness he gives us but a verbal adroitness which is witty and entirely satisfying:

So in my kingdom my bewitching gaze
accepts the turning sky that forever and ever
trails an embroidered present before my eyes,
a storm of stars from the blind
cave of my mind.

in which the auditory subtlety, the swift change of rhythm from line to line, actually brings off *forever and ever* with no protest from the reader's sensibility. He writes with his five senses:

A seesaw chiffchaff rocking to his music

proclaims himself triumphant amourist.
In pantomime extravagance of thickets
robin sings daggers jewelled to the hilt
against hedge-skulking robin . . .

and with equal ease writes with his sensibility alone:

And I, caparisoned only with desires
poured in my ear when in the secret garden
I fainted among flowers, excite old fires
with a fool's bladder, while the dreadful burden
of hollow woods I've run from tolls behind me
and dazing jays fly in the air and blind me.

A little too elegant perhaps: *I fainted among flowers; the dreadful burden*—but this poem is called "Tapestry Duel". His wealth of imagery and his skill in spending it, the variety of themes used, his vitality, should carry Mr. McCaig into the front rank of contemporary poets.

Another second volume, by E. J. Scovell, inspires less confidence. Her book contains early and recent poetry, and it is sadly evident that the earlier the better. Miss Scovell writes with care and grace, sometimes, rather surprisingly, raising the despondent ghost of Aldous Huxley's very still verse. Of the early poetry:

With words we betray the vision.
Words with wind disturb the air,
With breath and eye-bright flicker of wings
Between our sight and still despair.
And tears breed pity, pity is
A tune, and music raises comfort,
The old, starved, elastic moon

is competent though not entirely convincing, but:

Yet she was quiet as a mouse
Or a small knife that makes its house
Whose burrow is its own neat size

displays cleverness rather than wit. Her poems on children are clearly about her own children. The later work, charming as it is, seems private, though when stirred from her own garden by a trespasser Miss Scovell can be incisively effective, as in "The Refugee". This poet is in danger of charming her readers away from her work altogether.

Spender's new book, the first collection of his work to appear for five years, contains twenty-four poems, six of which compose an Elegy for Margaret Spender (two previously published, now revised) and eight of which are on a single theme and entitled "Spiritual Explorations". The remainder are on various subjects, but all of them imply a visionary, even mystical experience: even the observation of a landscape becomes, with this poet, a spiritual exploration, a vision conveyed to the reader by means of an intense and concentrated imagery. It seems to me that this book embodies some of Mr. Spender's best poetry and shows a constructive development from previous work. Though the development is hindered by a rhyme which is frequently strained, occasionally so strained as to

twist the meaning of a poem (but Mr. Spender's virtues have always been thrown into relief by his fault: so his visions now seem to gain by being seen through splintered glass), the poetry as a whole has gained in width and depth of reference, in steadiness and in density. There seems to be also a more objective approach to a poem: the work is less uneven than it was because its emotive charge is more controlled and less compulsive.

In Mr. Spender's earlier work one detected an uneasy ambivalence, a kind of masochistic self-pity and self-abandonment to the object of a poem, alternating with a sadistic imagery and a tenacious clinging to a poem long after it had achieved its object. Hence the metrical irregularity, tortured rather than tortuous; thus the embarrassment of the reader bathed at one moment in Mr. Spender's tears and shocked out of disbelief (willingly suspended, for Mr. Spender has always been a persuasive poet) by over-charged lines like: *guts on skewers of pity; Heads bounce down stone steps; Axe severing a stalk;* in the next moment. But now it seems that a more profitable antithesis has been set up. There is on the one hand the objectivity to which I have referred, even a surprising robustness:

Since we are what we are, what shall we be
But what we are? We are, we have
Six feet and seventy years, to see
The light, and then resign it for the grave.
We are not worlds, no, nor infinity,
We have no claims on stone, except to prove
In the inventions of the human city
Our selves, our breath, our death, our love.

and on the other this almost blinding awareness of landscape and divine landscape, or of human interchangeability for instance:

Tell him he does inhabit
Himself yourself, his spirit your spirit,
And let your purposes his purposes
Unfold through buds of him their flowers.

Through walls he builds and towers
O be your truth transparent
Make his hands burn with your burning roses.

It is important to notice that he speaks of human interchangeability rather than of human solidarity. Indeed, in the "Spiritual Explorations" one feels that the self-pity of the early work has moved into a new and more terrifying phase, an abandonment of any self at all. Here, where Mr. Spender is writing of himself as witness, renouncing free-will, becoming the dream of another sleeper, he is really expressing a self contempt and a contempt for other men some way removed from his sincere intentions. I think it was Kathleen Raine who, some years ago, suggested that Mr. Spender would become a moralist: he seems to have become a mystic. Some of his passionate (and excellent) poetry makes one feel that it was written by a man about to die.

A development of a different kind is to be noticed in his use of imagery. Mr. Spender has never been a widely imaginative poet, and

consequently a limited set of images was always being elaborated and turned about in his hands. Now however, he offers an almost startling concentration of previous imagery into new complexes and condensed metaphors. (Except in the two revised poems, where the opposite process has taken place). Thus:

Where sailors' eyes rolling on floors of seas
Hold in their fading darkening irises
The vision of some lost still living girl

seems not so much to remind one of a previous poem, "The Drowned", as to contain the whole of it. The first three lines of

As she will live, who candle-lit
Floats upon her final breath,
The ceiling of the frosty night
And her high room beneath,
Wearing not like destruction, but
Like a white dress, her death.

incorporate two verses of "The Indifferent One", while the last two lines carry most of the meaning of "The Little Coat". The *high room* comes from "The Room Above The Square" and other contexts of similar feeling, and a line from the same poem echoes in:

Strike to the womb the unborn with new power
Speak to the boy back from the sword-bright war

two lines which bring together that poem and "The Prisoners". It is this concentration of imagery which lends Mr. Spender's new poetry its density and its power. Such a movement towards the use of fixed image-clusters suggests (as do some of the images themselves) that his poetry is becoming like that of Miss Edith Sitwell, who also writes her poetry round the stars. Mr. Spender does not deploy his materials as skilfully as she does, for her poetic progress has been to construct a set of symbols, load them with meaning and other trappings, and then to play an involved and beautifully ordered game of chess with them across a squared tapestry. She usually wins the game. Mr. Spender however, drew originally upon Rilke for a great deal of imagery and a certain clarity of gesture, and the vision he gives us now is still similar to Rilke's vision, that is to say, it is fragmentary. Mr. Read's images build up, by implication, a vision divine and precise, a world-order in which man might have his being. Spender's images build up a vision divine. I am not sure whether his new volume is full of good minor poetry or not-so-good major poetry, but certainly it should be read. His poems are moving, they add to one's world, and some of them may live beyond our time.

Harry Roskolenko

Letter from Japan

Japan smells, but not of rosewater. The odour is ancient and traditional. Among other minus items, Japan neglected to fertilise its soil in the modern manner. It is impossible to go by a village without becoming aware of the past—a past that impinges constantly on the present. If the current image is one of rubble—a nation of wooden shacks—the past confronts the sociological and cultural sightseer with all the shocks the heart and mind can bring up. Ruins are almost always associated with richness; death with life; work with fruition—and/or hunger. In this composite of desolation, the contrasts are abysmally violent. It is a fantasia of moral, social and physical wreckage, serrated like the terracing on the mountains and staring down like a vast Buddha over all Japan.

Transportation is mostly on the arching back, by horse or ox, and these forms dominate all types of movement. In a land known for its highly specialised technique of copying Western commerce and industry, the Japanese have now passed into a stage of improvisation and invention, substituting by ingenuity and hard work for all the things now missing. And when almost everything is missing, the entire nation (the workers and peasants) must forage for life.

Alongside the Inland Sea, which is vastly beautiful, lies the wreckage of the great Kure Shipyards and Arsenals, the greatest junkheap in the world. From there, only twenty miles north, is famed Hiroshima, where modern death had its first experiment. After that come the many cities of the land, where rice-paper walls meet steel girders—but they meet in the earth. Only Kyoto stands—ancient, traditional, beautiful—the shrines that no longer symbolise anything in Japan. They were not bombed, and therefore they make for some subtle distinction and moral qualification.

Like man and nature, commerce has its curious currencies. The Black Market, unrelated to systems of money, is the vice of need, of barter, of life. For without that, only the legal aspects of inflation, the withering ugliness of hunger, would be the accepted token for a large section of the population. When foreign troops occupy, they also regulate the nature of an economy, as well as the moral disproportions of time, war and man. The nature of this phase of the occupation (and it is considered highly successful!) is the peculiar relationship of the occupation forces to the quixotic economy and culture of the land. If General MacArthur is the unconscious Emperor-Elect of Japan, then every GI over the rank of 2nd Lieutenant is a Prince. Military careers, once interrupted by the war's end, are now being pursued with exacting variations on the theme of "legitimate

looting". It is more than rumour to say that every brass-hat carries around a private corporation within the bookkeeping confines of his iron hat; and when the "peace" is finally signed, the finest piece of organised selling the world has ever known will come from the islands of Honshu. The country has been drained of its art, folk-craft and other stuffs of its highly-stylised past, by every ship sailing from Yokohama for San Francisco. Trade has a variety of hand-maidens and servants, even though they are ostensibly in uniform and come as servants of Jeffersonian Democracy.

Politically, the country is skipping through many ropes and hoops, with SCAP (Supreme Command Allied Powers) occasionally calling the tune. If the Japanese learned obedience before, they are getting a select dose of it now. Strangely—which may not be in keeping with one's desires—they do not seem to object. The demonstrations of the various unions are perfect examples of a past regimentation still working as an operative force. Overt acts are few; arrests for acts against the authorities even fewer—mostly within the area of black-market operations.

If the communists are a negative force in the elections, they are a strong force in the unions, as well as in the left-wing of the Social Democratic Party—a skeleton key that can open many sly doors to them. The socialists are calling for the nationalisation of coal and fertiliser industries, with indemnification, and are projecting nationalisation for all public services, curtailment of interest on government bonds, as future items. But they will break their backs on the question of a coalition; the old question in an old tongue.

The theme of democracy is a political and social constant all over Japan, embracing all types and all classes, including Generals, Princes and clerks—all of them writing letters to the press, interpreting various laws now before the Diet.

In the arts, the same nervous quality prevails. Yet nothing new or startling is bound to happen for some time, for the writer and the painter must first rediscover what they have lost in the years of the war. Cut off from all foreign sources, Japanese men of letters told me that they are forced to read *Time* to find out what has happened in culture outside Japan. Before the war one could buy almost any avant-garde magazine—but the cultural oppressions of the military forbade the entrance of foreign aesthetic and social ideas. The time lag is now a herald of the lag in the arts, and each new translation, from even the most banal work, will be looked upon as a precious gift from the democracies.

If anything shows vitality in a country, it is the amount of "little magazines" which spring up independently and attempt to intrude upon the major weaknesses by injecting a set of values somewhat lost in the shuffle. In Japan it is even easier, for publishers and printers are usually poets and novelists themselves, and work on a co-operative basis, which makes it easier for young writers to get started. There are many magazines, though none of them sadly, is printed in the Hepburn system of *Romaji,* the Latinised alphabet, which has now been officially accepted for all schools. *Romaji,* with its

common teaching, will be one of the most important ventures in Japanese schooling. It will make possible communication with the West, and will free the Japanese from the oppression of Chinese script.

During the war only an official literature was allowed. Authors and poets were sent to the front, but nothing of importance was written. At the reconstituted P.E.N. club I talked of our Southern American novelists—Faulkner, Carson McCullers, Eudora Welty, Katherine Anne Porter, etc., and the solitude of the South in literature. If the subject was apt, it was also new to them, as well as the various writers I spoke of. Their own iron curtain apparently began in 1937, not in 1941.

It is rather difficult to describe what is really happening in Japanese literature without mentioning many names and titles. And to avoid this in my short letter, I would rather speak of tendencies. They reflect the period of enforced non-literary activity during the war. Curiously enough, Sartre has suddenly become known, if for no other reason than an unfinished novel, *Saturday Lady,* serialised in *Yomuiri* (*Reading and Selling*), and written by Oda Sakunosuka, who died in January, 1946. It was suddenly taken up by the critics, and the word *Existentialist,* which has the same confusion of meaning and identity as in any other land, was bandied about. The book deals with abnormal sexuality, and has been likened to Sartre's novel, *Intimacy,* which somehow got published at the same time. This is a significant event, as it brings both the time and cultural lags within grips, even if bent on the peculiar bow of the gentlemen who sit on the *terrasse* of the Café Deux Magots.

There are two types of Japanese novels. The first is shaped after the European, while the second, *Shimpen Shosetu,* meaning "private papers and intimate life" usually has the author for its subject. It is uniquely Japanese, even though it appears to be merely an autobiographical medium, much liked by esoteric intellectuals. Of poetry, there is much to be said. Every Japanese reads poetry, even if he does not write it, and it is closely associated with his most intimate thoughts. To-day European manifestations and forms are being discovered, and will eventually prevail over *Hokku*, the 17 syllable folk-poem, and *Waka,* constructed on 31 syllables, both based on native imagism and restriction of sensualism. If Whitman is the most popular American poet, the modern poet has been influenced by English romanticism, French symbolism, and even surrealism, now attempting to stage a return engagement. To help along in this trend towards Western concepts of poetry, Professor Kuwabara of North-western Imperial University, at Sendai, published a book last year summing up both *Hokku* and *Waka* and concluded by saying that both forms were not true literature, that only adequate experiments with Western forms could bring about a cultural flowering.

As for painters, the most important, like Oguiss, Wakita, Inakuma and the great Foujita, all want to return to France, claiming they cannot paint the Japanese scene. In keeping with this, I might mention the first European exhibition, predominantly French, ever held in Japan,

and based on the famous Matsukata collection. Held at the dark, dampish Neno Art Gallery, it seemed more a fantasy than an exhibition. Anxious schoolgirls and boys lined up and gaped as they passed from a Renoir to a Matisse, from a Seurat or a Soutine on to a Titian or a Cranach. Even odder was the huge crowd of kids gazing at a Cranach female nude committing suicide, in almost *hari kari* fashion. Alongside this luscious lady in lament was a beautiful Titian head, completely ignored by the crowd. One wonders whether it was the association of the dagger and the belly, or just flesh and blood in ascension that made them ignore the Titian.

Like a woman who has had many children, Japan is pregnant with all the asides of art and culture. Within its grasp are the Parisian quality of the sidewalk, American engineering, Asiatic agriculture, the Janus-like impulsion to see everything, be everything and await a universal answer. Like any culture in transition still bordering on latent feudalistic remnants which are hastily being removed by a new democracy, the mental pattern is just as confusing as the physical rubble one meets in the streets. To most intellectuals Pearl Harbour was the greatest error the Japanese Imperial government could make. Very early in the war, they were resigned to defeat. After Guadalcanal, it was definitive. For the masses, the capture of Saipan was the end. This last statement, made by one of the leftist intellectuals, showed obviously how removed they were from the people.

As an example of verbal impressionism, when I asked a Japanese house-boy what his name was, he answered, "My name Kodako—like Kodak camera."

To A. E. Housman—John Atkins

Let us stand in the railway station and weep in unison.
Let us beat our foreheads on the roofs of darkened cabins.
You were the first to tear up the unsigned treaties.
Let us think once more of Death, Dishonour, Diabetes.
I would not for the world joke—no, not I.
I am too sombre, too regardant of the slick catastrophe.
Then let us meet to-night, when the grey owl calls
And sing of the sanguine bed, our phoney madrigals.

Now let us fix our fates, disturb our pleasures,
Destroy our hopes and revel in our wounds,
Deny our friends, take arsenic, be meek aggressors,
Make war on Jesus. Have you ever felt
A bright colour defying our disease?
Then count your agonies, inter your enemies,
Make sure of these.

Spring Evening—Thomas Good

Grey in dissolving light
The city recedes and these red roofs
Prepare for the magic of night
Smoke from hearths no opulence fills.

High on the piercing hill
Murmur of leaves instils the spring,
The almond embalmed in splendour, chill,
Entreats the warmth of sun's awakening.

Sleep imminent asks soft courage here
The clown withholds, his patter veils
All clearest vision and in doubt
Performs unseasonable sacrilege of fear.

Alone in these pale distances
Wind and the bells possess the hour,
The heart in fever measures milestones,
The stealthy bee invokes the flower.

Nature ascendant, resolute in pain
Assumes the song or sacrifice
Where blood is fruitful, time the seed's travail
Until the tortuous vine is green again.

Silence transparent fills the field
Unripe for reaping, yet the void
Echoed in man, beauty has too,
Hallowed by unknown hands, the new.

New Year's Day—Thomas Parkinson

I

Drifts in the wind the marbled-veinéd sky;
Aegean blue
Breaks through
The clearest wisping white.
The mountains
Lift their shoulders breaking bare
While fountains
Foam in January air

As a brightest hour wings our faces
Caress of greeting in a calm place.

This is our garden, and the squirrel
Beads eyes at us as his tail brushes
Lightly the bamboo rushes;
At our feet the brook whirls
Mute in a steady clarity,
The minnow's spines limned visibly,
While through the cloud-coat gnaws
The brittle airplane, free,
Over the world that circles easily,
Over the gulls' and the minnows' lanes.

II

Here in the oak and the poplar-planted earth
She lies, a form among these many forms,
And so articulates their death and birth,
So holds them in their present posture firm,

That I have never known a world so stilled,
Nor seen a eucalyptus so untrembling;
And I should think the living scene were killed
Or that it lay as possum in dissembling

In fear of some grim foot whose fall was near.
I place my hand upon her living breast,
That so has stilled the yellow leaf and sear.
I wonder that the world should be at rest.

When she lies in so warm a vibrance near,
I wonder that the world should be at peace
When death can touch all that the world holds dear.
I have in me no rest and no release,
Nor can I take a pine and cypress stance,
In cool acceptance of cruel circumstance.

III

Fair transient upon the changing face
Of this fair world, expressive shadow
Cast up upon these earthly palisades;
How dims the day, how low
The sun's red lantern goes
In the shade and green of dusk; the sun
Drops to the west's beckon,
And fragrant night comes to the heavens.

So closes this day, and the park
Holds still in an impending dark,

Our heads in walking converse turned,
The grass by wind and footfall bent,
Cast in the white grace
Of a cold moon, reflective planets,
The distant beating stars that burn,
And the wide blue of interstellar space.
All look on us in this clear place,
My love, fairest on the earth's fair face.

IV

O if ever the cord be loosed,
This cerement of flesh
Drop down, and we stand free,
What will we learn of other uses
Than Jonquil's knowledge and the eye's flash?
If the ripe being drop, then will we see
Some land of singing suns
Where nothing's left to say
For nothing's left undone?

Is there a cooler space, more singing
Than is my body in your arms?
A temporal rest grant unto me,
O love, as in our ever lingering
Walk, we laugh to admit our poverty,
And from no other need ask alms.

Nothing brighter than this coolness,
And death's emphatic stroke
Looks from this place like time's caress
To raise the completed being, its brok-
en will, its wildest success.

Time Is Not Itself—William Porritt

Time is the sound the wind instils
within our air-still silences,
holding a train's departing moanings
mingling with sighs as those in sea-born shells.

Is, on the withered heights of poppies
.sounds the seeds beat in their pods;
the sense of things relentlessly
gone or not fulfilled, whose lives

when near, were only as the urgent birds
changing from east to west direction,
perhaps for a second existing as we
at this central pole of presentness.

And when in steam and iron parting
trains that tear the hands from handclasps
sound their horizontal weeping,
time is the future, the wept-over past.

But if insistently we pin
time like a moth in the tabloid present,
the vanished glory or the future's fury
divorces the moment from certainness.

And time is then the moveless room
with light from partly-curtained glass;
a sense of sleep uncertainly-ended
the knowledge of soon the night's fresh forgetting.

Or in the room of velvet and waiting
the figure peaceless in the chair; then
soon the two who meet yet do not say
the things that in waiting each expected.

Time is the scene through remembered windows
that goads with greater than near-known richness,
when always the winds from a distance engender
knowledge of partings from things we never knew.

Two Sonnets—Emanuel Litvinoff

1

The landscape is remote: only the sun's
Gold fire staring from the unlidded eye
Of a mad incorruptible blue sky
Remains immediate, and soon the moon's
Pale ectoplasmic light will spill its terror.

Up springs the murderer, red-headed Cain,
Dreaming of bitterness, a lurid stain
Remorse cannot erase from his livid mirror:
A serpent sends a sinuous shudder
Through the gleaming desert of grinning sand:
God's curse consumes like acid this dread plain
And marks its marble forehead with his hand,
And Abel runs to meet his brother's knife
Smiling the welcome of his mortal wound.

2

I heard them speak, the shadow of their words
Grew images of loss among my dreams,
Their staring heads impaled on savage swords
Were wounding sermons floating on the stream's
Calm certainty: *"All that was gain is gone,*
Your death is nothing and your life is less
Than the formal integrity of stone
And the weathered patina of its face."

But soon their words were scattered like dead leaves
Blown by a brief forgetting breath of wind
And, turned to migrant birds, their heads took flight
To summer's wholeness: all that made their lives
Dispersed, leaving a winter in the mind
And a vexed shadow half dissolved in light.

Still the Question of Another Man's Brother—Alex Austin

Who cried
When the last soldier died?
Who told
The story that was already old
Enough to please the children of Elizabeth?

The ships were not empty
When they came back from the wars.
They carried men and rats in the hold
And the sea
Sang them all to sleep together
And dreams spoke of many things
That were not left behind
In the still land of death.

The men had come home
From the land of a strange lover
And they were ready to take
Their wives to the king.
They had come home
And they were going to forget death for another
Moment while they bargained for dreams

But they could not sleep. The night had become
thick with phantoms all around them.

The sea had stopped singing
And the stillness seemed to be saying,
"Which one of you cried
When your last brother died?"

George Woodcock

A Study in Decline

H. G. Wells was one of those writers who outlive their significance without acquiring the blessed gift of becoming silent. For the last thirty years of his life he had been steadily undermining the achievement of his youth, and, if he died a somewhat anomalous and derided figure in the worlds of literature and politics, the blame can be put on little else than the series of unworthy books which came from his own pen during the last decades of his life.

For in his early days Wells produced some of the best writing of his period. George Orwell has pointed out that, to the generation who came to maturity between 1900 and 1920, his books were a tonic revelation of independent thought breaking in upon the hidebound world of Victorian and neo-Victorian religious and conventional conservatism.

It is difficult to remember these early experiences of Wells when one has endured the later disappointments, the turgid pretences of books like *The Autocracy of Mr. Parham* and *The Bulpington of Blup,* the outdated social inanities of *The New World Order* and *Mind at the End of its Tether,* which formed the greater part of his later writing. We have been used for so long to the elderly Wells giving slipshod writing and confused thought, that we are much too ready to forget his early books, with their clear and competent writing and their endless stimulation of thought, particularly the thought of the young. It is therefore fitting that, in their selected edition of the works of Wells, Penguin Books should have included no less than eight of these early books, which constitute the truly representative products of his genius. These include three of the scientific romances, *The Island of Dr. Moreau, The Invisible Man* and *The War of the Worlds,* together with a selection of short stories, under the title of *The Time Machine,* which mostly fall into the same category. Then there are four of the novels of lower middle class life which represent the other province of Wells's undoubted literary achievement—*Love and Mr. Lewisham, Kipps, Tono Bungay* and *The History of Mr. Polly.* The remaining books of the ten now published are *The New Machiavelli,* an inferior novel whose chief interest lies in the fact that it represents the beginning of the Wellsian decadence, and *A Short History of the World,* which hardly concerns us in this present essay.

It will be necessary to ask why, after that remarkable period of less than twenty years when Wells, beginning with a masterpiece, produced one good book after another, he should suddenly have ceased to write as a convincing artist and should have become instead merely a second-rate commercial novelist with a bad habit of becoming involved in compromising political situations. For such tragedies of the decay of creative genius concern all writers. While none is incorruptible, or preserved inviolably from 'the world's slow stain',

the consideration of other men's failures may at least warn us of some of the dangers of literary popularity and influence. For the failure of Wells, it is only too evident, was born of success.

The early life of Wells, before he became a writer, is well known, and it is only necessary now to recall his lower middle class background, his apprenticeship to the haberdashery trade, his private schoolteaching and his years of study at the Royal College of Science, in order to observe the influence of these experiences on the nature of his early novels. His scientific training, opening his naturally curious mind to the likely and unlikely possibilities implicit in the new discoveries, gave him a basis for his scientific fantasies, and for the more practical prophesies—such as the mastery of flight—in which he showed an often surprisingly accurate foresight; it also provided much of the background of college life and the routine of scientific work which occur in such novels as *Tono Bungay* and *Love and Mr. Lewisham*. His lower middle-class upbringing and occupations provided the foundations for his best work. The life of the little shopkeepers and clerks was his natural environment, and when he wrote of it he was always at home; when he rose into the highly-paid upper bourgeoisie he was never at his ease, and the novels which he tried to adapt to these new conditions, the stories of politicians and big business men, were not convincing. Only Edward Ponderevo, climbing from the petty bourgeoisie to the ranks of big business and never really leaving his early environment behind, is a really live person among the whole gallimaufry of Wells's upper class dummies. Wells was essentially a man of the counter and the desk, of the sweated millions whose shabby gentility is their only protection against a poverty often more grinding than that of the labouring proletariat, and away from their life he was a man cut off from his roots.

The first scientific romances were remarkable among early novels, both for their sharpness of expression and for the clarity with which they expressed what Wells saw in the scientific discoveries of his time—and in those early days he saw much more and much more distinctly than in his later days as the impresario of modern science. With most novelists there is, for a while at least, a process of precision. A writer starts to express himself wordily and vaguely, and gradually passes into a period of maturity when he adopts an economy of phrase which expresses his ideas all the more clearly. At first his imagery is blurred; then he draws it into focus. Later still, as age comes on, his spareness of wording and clearness of image tend to leave him until, in old age, or late middle age, he begins to write slack, ageing work.

But with Wells the progression was quite different. At no subsequent period has he written books with such economy of phrases, directness of speech, appropriateness of action or freshness of imagination, as the scientific romances of the first five years of his career. Compare the rapid story-telling, the vivid presentation of situations, the compactness of effect of *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, with the flabby writing and myopic presentation of *The New Machiavelli*. Or even with the picaresque meanderings of *Kipps* and *Mr. Polly*. The first novel, and the other books written in this early period, are far more

direct, and have a more immediate effect on the imagination than anything he wrote afterwards.

How can we explain this deterioration? For in my opinion it is a steady and severe deterioration, which was only delayed by the diversion of his interests into the portrayal of lower middle-class life. *Kipps* and *Tono Bungay* are very good books in their way, but they lack the force and rapidity of the early novels. And once this second vein of inspiration was exhausted in *Mr. Polly*, the decline into fatty degeneration, the appearance of a kind of mental dropsy, were rapid and startling.

It can be explained, at least partially, by the contention that Wells was not a novelist in any real sense of the word. I have been careful in this essay to describe his scientific stories as romances, and in my opinion it is as an allegorical romancer rather than as a novelist that we shall find Wells of the greatest interest. The true novelist deals first and foremost with people and their relationships. Human situations are the material out of which he builds his art, and any ideas which he may bring out in the process should play a subsidiary rôle. The main attention is drawn to the men, not to the ideas. But almost ever since the novel began in the seventeenth century there have been writers who have used its form to express ideas in their own minds rather than to plumb the depths of human character or merely to tell intriguing tales. It has been contended that Mrs. Behn's *Oroonoko* was centred round the idea of abolishing slavery, and, while this can be disputed, it is certain that the idea of the nobility of primitive man, later repeated by such writers as Bernardin de St. Pierre and Rousseau, was an important element in her almost characterless novel. The end of the eighteenth century brought a whole school of novels representing social ideas. The first, and perhaps the best and most famous, was Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, but many others appeared from the pens of such writers as Mrs. Inchbald and Mrs. Robertson, and, later from those of Godwin's own children, William and Mary. The general plot of these revolutionary novels is that of an innocent individual who is hunted down by the forces of hostile society, and whose adventures are meant to illustrate political observations, as Godwin told very frankly in his preface to *Caleb Williams*.

The early novels of Wells came from a background and a stimulus very similar to those which produced the novels of Godwin and his disciples. In Godwin's day the French revolution and the spread of rationalist doubt on matters of religion had stirred among the younger intellectuals a concern with revolutionary ideas which superseded the more literary preoccupations of the Augustan age. Almost no young writer of consequence in this period was wholly exempt from such ideas, except perhaps Keats, and even he was an enthusiastic reader of Godwin's novels. A similar ferment affected the period of the early 1890's, when Wells began to write extensively. The doctrines of anarchism and socialism in a more or less revolutionary form had affected the spirit of the age, scientific curiosity, then an iconoclastic influence, had penetrated into the penultimate layers of society, and political, scientific and aesthetic ideas of revolt were breaking down

steadily the old Victorian morality. The trial of Wilde in 1895 seemed a triumph for the reactionary, but it was at best a Pyrrhic victory, and did little to stem the attack on Victorian ideas and reactionary concepts of social organisation and behaviour, which was maintained by the more conscious young men and women of the period.

Wells, with his scientific training and first-hand knowledge of the plight of the urban underdog, the depressed lower middle-class, was affected profoundly by this ferment of rebellious ideas, and, just as Godwin had put his thoughts into allegorical romances, so Wells put his scientific speculations into stories like *The Time Machine* and his social criticism into novels like *Kipps*. An interesting point of contact between Wells and the earlier group of social novelists is that Mary Shelley's most famous novel, *Frankenstein,* and Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau* are not merely concerned with the same problem of the dangers implicit in scientific inquiry, but also with the identical surface plot, the creation of an artificial man.

The extent to which Wells's novels are dependent on ideas is further shown by his complete failure to evolve any satisfactory and individual method of characterisation. In the early scientific books his human beings are no better characters than the narrators in most allegorical novels, as little rounded into complete human beings as, say, Gulliver or Caleb Williams himself. In the later novels of petty bourgeois life, he found the need for more complicated persons, but here he appears to have followed three methods of evading creation by substituting synthetic characters. First he uses the autobiographical method and inserts what is obviously a self-portrait, as in George Ponderevo, Mr. Lewisham in at least the early part of *Love and Mr. Lewisham,* and the minor character Parsons in *Mr. Polly* Secondly, he produces figures like Kipps and Sid Pornick, who were probably taken directly from actual people Wells knew in his early life, or who might be generalisations from the classes of young men with whom he came in contact during this period. Thirdly, he falls into the Dickensian method. Being unable to create a person with a really rich internal life that will project him vividly into the reader's mind, he creates caricatures, types, oddities who bear a striking resemblance, in speech and often in outer attributes, to the figures with whom Dickens peoples his own similar middle-class scenes. They are impossible people to imagine in real life, walking through the flesh-and-blood world of the early 1900's, but in the unreal and somewhat hectic atmosphere of Dickens, the whimsical world of Sam Weller's quips and Mr. Micawber's peculiarities, Mr. Polly with his distorted English, Uncle Pentstemon, the exuberant Chitterlow and the comic business tychoon, Edward Ponderevo, would certainly find their places. They are perhaps more concerned with the practical details of life than the people of Dickens—nowhere in the latter author do we find the actual business activities of people shown in quite such detail as the curious transactions leading up to the great fraud of Tono Bungay, but their general shape is the same—they have the same exaggerations of manner and speech, the same spectacular seediness, the same somewhat hilarious parody of life.

The feud between Mr. Polly and Uncle Jim, for example, is quite Dickensian in its excessive improbability, and, in these lower middle-class novels at least, Wells has in common with Dickens that he does not quite know where to stop, and, in the zest of his imagination, loses all sense of reality. Chitterlow, for instance, has just too much bounce, even for "a Nacter". But in people like Chitterlow and Uncle Jim we can see how Wells shared the lower middle-class ideas of people on the fringes of their society. His clerks and students and shop assistants are all real enough; they are humorised, perhaps, but in the same way as people of this class humorise themselves—the self-belittlement enjoyed in comic strips of fat little business men and flighty office girls. But his peripheral characters have none of that reality which writers like Joyce or Graham Greene, who themselves live mentally on the periphery, can give them. To Wells, still safely inside his class, an actor like Chitterlow, a medium like Chaffery, a habitual criminal like Uncle Jim, are quite unreal people, and he is incapable of penetrating their real lives. So he makes them talk like "characters", with an exuberance of phrase which emphasises their assumed "difference" from his own class. I have never encountered an actor who spoke with the same richness as Chitterlow or a medium who made such delightfully cynical admissions of roguery as Chaffery, nor do I think Wells ever met them outside his imagination. He was building characters around the common lower-middle-class conception of an actor as a voluble whisky-drinker or a medium as a financial and mental fraud. His idea of the nature of habitual criminals is even farther from reality. Compare Uncle Jim with any of Graham Greene's criminal characters, Raven or Pinky Brown, and he shows up as a very poor creation, with his wanton destructiveness expressed in the typical slapstick violence of the pantomime, and his mode of speech which is very far, in its involved ingenuity, from that of the real crook, who, while he has his own colourful vocabulary, does not indulge in the curiously middle-class fancies with which Wells credits Uncle Jim.

There is the passage where the latter threatens Mr. Polly with violence.

> "I'll make a mess of you," he said in his hoarse whisper. "I'll do you—injuries. I'll 'urt you. I'll kick you ugly, see? I'll 'urt you in 'orrible ways—'orrible ways . . . You'll cry to see yourself. See? Cry, you will. I'll make a gory mess of you. I'll cut bits orf you."
>
> His whispering voice sank until Mr. Polly could hear only the dim fragments of sentences. " 'Orrible things to you—'orrible things . . . Kick yer ugly . . . Cut yer — liver out . . . spread it all about, I will . . . see? I don't care a dead rat one way or the uvver."

And so on. Even allowing for necessary expurgations, a real criminal would speak quite differently.

Yet, for all the lack of accurate observation, for all the comic postcard oddities of behaviour and speech which his characters display, Wells's middle-class novels are excellent documents of the kind of life which the shopkeepers and clerks lived in that unbelievably tranquil period before the two wars, when George Ponderevo was still playing with experimental aeroplanes, when military service was the lot only of embittered failures, and when few people, like Wells

in his other, scientific self, foresaw the kind of events which in a very few years would disrupt its peace and turn its apparent stagnation into the flux of war. *Kipps* may not contain the three-dimensional people we find in the novels of Dostoevsky. But it does give a very vivid impression of the social gradations, pretences, snobberies and cultural attitudes of the middle-class of its time, and shows the kind of economic insecurity which dogged every grade of this class and which was disguised by the most irritating and subtle forms of class pride.

When he set out to describe the ordinary world, Wells, like Dickens, was completely lost once he stepped outside the limits of his own experience. The Royal College of Science, the drapers' shops of country towns, and that dingy preoccupation of more than a century of English novelists, the bad private school, are the places where he is at home, and whose evils he exposes with the sharpest pen. But as soon as he enters classes above or below his own, the air of conviction vanishes. Already, Lady Beatrice is the least sympathetic person in *Tono Bungay,* a mere lay figure beside that rich lower middle-class wit, Susan Ponderevo, and the liaison between George Ponderevo and this aristocrat is certainly the least convincing feature of the book—far less authentic than Edward Ponderevo's most fantastic business flights.

It is significant that this lack of authenticity, while it extended to all Wells's writing on ordinary human life outside his own immediate experience, should have been completely absent from the most ambitious of his early scientific romances. It seemed that his imagination could create a whole world of its own, distinct from the world of the present, and yet could not conceive what happened in the minds of people in the same society who were merely divided from him by differences in upbringing. It is, of course, a revealing comment on our present order that the mental barriers between various classes should be so great as to make the aristocratic world something more difficult for the talented ex-shop assistant to imagine authentically than the landscape and inhabitants of the moon. It might be said that Wells found the moon more interesting, but this does not allow for the fact that in his later career he chose deliberately to write of the upper-class world, at a time when the public would have much preferred a continuation of the old scientific romances.

A few sentences previously, I described the world of Wells's scientific novels as "distinct from the world of the present." But in some important respects this is not strictly correct. It is, for instance, a characteristic of Wells's scientific romances that, while the narrative and subject are maintained on a plane quite outside ordinary experience, the environment is described with a painstaking realism which gives a most vivid air of conviction to the stories. There is, in fact, much more realistic description in these romances than in the novels of actual Edwardian life. *Mr. Polly* is full of vague, romantic and wholly unreal situations and emotions; *The War of the Worlds* takes place in a real South of England landscape. and the Martians and their inventions are described with such meticulous detail

that we can form much clearer mental pictures of them than of Kipps—infinitely clearer than the blur by which William Clissold is represented to most readers of that tedious book. The monsters of Dr. Moreau live on a tropical island described with all the exactitude of a traveller's log, and the Invisible Man bursts in upon the quiet society of a real English village.

But the most meticulous realism in the description of scenes would not give these stories their characteristic solidity and meaning, if there were not in almost every case something real about the fantasy itself. Wells had an undeniably prophetic vision of scientific possibilities, a gift which deteriorated when he tried to apply it to politics, instead of science. That is perhaps why his romances, when we read them to-day, seem more vivid than ever. To the Edwardians, nestling safely in their solid red-brick villas on the growing edge of London, it must have seemed preposterous indeed to imagine Martian war machines striding over the neat suburban gardens and slaying with heat rays and asphyxiant smoke. Aerial battles, land ironclads, time machines, rockets to the moon, making men invisible and turning animals into men—all these must have appeared absolutely fantastic and ridiculous to the people who first read Wells; yet they did read him perhaps because his ideas were stimulating, perhaps because the gigantic action of his stories was a compensation for the uneasy inaction of their lives. But to us now, these romances have the added reality that so much of their fantasy has been realised—so much that we cannot be sure they will not all come true.

Less than twenty years after Wells wrote of them, planes were fighting in the air and bombing cities, land ironclads in the form of tanks were transforming military strategy, and poison gas had frightened the world. Now we have gone a long way further towards realising the Wellsian prohecies. No Martian monsters have yet arrived, but the deadly ray they carried has actually been exceeded in destructive power by the atomic bomb, whose chief effect, like that of the Martian weapon, is devastation by heat. Rockets have not yet reached the moon, but only the other day an experimental projectile flew 108 miles from the earth before turning back. Wireless control of planes has come, as Wells foretold, and, if it has not yet been attempted to make sub-men out of animals, the achievements of surgery and grafting are almost as wonderful as those of Dr. Moreau. The only scientific romance that still represents an unattempted field is *The Time Machine,* and that was perhaps meant as a social allegory rather than a true scientific romance.

Besides these early stories, and such kindred books as *First Men on the Moon,* Wells wrote a later series of Utopian scientific books, such as *Men Like Gods* and *The Shape of Things to Come,* which are both greatly inferior in quality and radically changed in their scientific attitude. The later Wells was, politically and philosophically, an easy Utopian who found the solution of all our ills in the application of science, and who sketched idealised worlds in which all men have become scientifically conscious and live that peculiarly flat and disgusting existence which is the fate of all unfortunate dwellers in

imaginary Utopias. It is with this conception of science as the universal provider, the arbiter and inspirer of human values, that Wells is commonly associated to-day. But in his youth he had a much more critical view of science and a very acute awareness of the danger of scientific knowledge applied in an unimaginative way.

I do not suggest that Wells had ever any of the hatred for progress which is perennial among a certain type of intellectual. He saw very clearly that science could be used well, but he also saw that in irresponsible hands it could destroy the world. The Invisible Man, making his wrecking progress through a world which does not understand his singularly futile achievement, is perhaps symbolic of science run amok for lack of responsibility. Stories like *The War of the Worlds, The War in the Air,* and *The Land Ironclads,* demonstrate clearly the extreme horror with which science was very soon to endow warfare. *The Time Machine* has more social significance, in that it shows the kind of caste society that might very well come about where science has been used selfishly to foster privilege. But the most telling of all these stories is undoubtedly *The Island of Dr. Moreau,* in which Wells becomes the predecessor of Huxley, Zamiatin and all the other writers of *Brave New World* romances. For the significant and horrible thing in this book is not the physical vivisection by which animals are turned into the semblances of men, but the psychological conditioning by which their minds are made to work in the kind of mass pattern required by the ruler. This was an anticipation of what the totalitarian states have tried to do with men—in many cases successfully. The plasticity of the human mind has been used as Moreau used the minds of the beasts, and the result has been not unlike the last state of Moreau's island, the return to an aggravated bestiality.

It is clear that in these early days Wells had a very clear insight into the implications of science, and also into fundamental social issues. How did he lose this perceptiveness? How did he become the optimistic Utopian, the political mutton-head, the bad novelist we have known for the past thirty-five years?

I think there are two reasons which have sufficient prominence to be emphasised in this essay. Firstly, as we have seen, Wells had little power of understanding the minds of people who had not sprung from his own environment. With success as a novelist, he moved into the upper middle-class, but failed wholly to assimilate this new life, as he had done lower middle-class experience. Now he was the peripheral type on a foreign circle, and he fitted no better than Chitterlow or Uncle Jim fitted the charmed circle from inside which Wells himself worked in his earlier novels. He was irrevocably cut off from his own class, and lived only insecurely in the class above. He had roots in neither, and so failed to write convincingly of both. His upper middle-class novels, commencing with *The New Machiavelli,* represent a desperate but unsuccessful attempt to grasp and assimilate the social and political ideas of his new neighbours. Wells was becoming, in spite of himself, a progressive liberal, cut off by money and privilege from his native environment, by upbringing from those above. He lost any contact he may have had with truly revolutionary

thought, and his political unsureness was so great that during the war of 1914-18 he was easily persuaded of the justice of the Allied case, and allowed himself to be used by the British government as one of its leading propagandists. Some of the work he did then was quite discreditable, as he admitted afterwards, and he left it with a diminished self-respect and a political disillusionment which caused him to seek refuge in Utopian visions of the future, and to compensate for the messy disorder of the world in which he had become involved by creating visions of very neatly ordered communities managed solely by able technicians, according to precise scientific rules.

The second factor that destroyed Wells as a writer was his success as a prophet. He had a great love for science, or perhaps rather for the life of a scientific student and the kind of speculation which an imaginative man can make out of a not too expert knowledge of facts. But it seems that when he saw his prophecies coming true, when he saw the speculations of wars in the air, poison gas, etc., which had been the products of his moments of pleasurable work, taking concrete form, he had a great revulsion against the ideas which he had put forward in the early novels. He felt himself faced with the alternative of denouncing or glorifying science. He does not seem to have realised that there is a third alternative—to regard science as neutral and to seek the fault and the remedy within the men who apply it. Instead of saying, there are dangers in science, unless it is used morally, Wells sought to forget these dangers and to turn away to the contemplation of an order where, through science, men have at last begun to live like brothers in a kind of high-class celestial suburbia of appalling uniformity. Such spurious romances, glorifying scientific progress and concealing its dangers, as *Men Like Gods,* showed his typical approach, and it is significant that in *The Shape of Things to Come* he reserved for the scientist the task of saving the world from barbarism. He intended to become intolerant of anyone who questioned the value of scientific progress, began to admire Russian state socialism because, in spite of its illiberalism, he felt it showed an approach towards an ordered Utopia, and would no doubt have condemned any person who had written a later book like *The Island of Dr. Moreau* as a defeatist and a deserter from the cause of progress. Moreover, he developed an absolute faith in the progress of science and of the reasonable ideas of conduct which he associated with scientific thought. All the time during the war he under-estimated the strength of the Nazis because he failed to remember what he had known in his youth, that scientific progress and technical competency can in fact be combined with social irresponsibility and a philosophy of confessed irrationality. The crowning irresponsibility of scientists in preparing the atomic bomb and conniving at its release over Hiroshima must have been a bitter revelation for the old man who had still contrived to hope and think there were ways and means by which the scientist could save the world.

The other day I read in a magazine the statement that Wells projected his ego upon the future. But this is true only for the early part of his life. After 1914, when he saw the accuracy of his own foresight, he became afraid of himself, and the whole of his

subsequent history was involved in the attempt to escape from himself, to avoid the fundamental but unpleasant responsibility of his character and seek the consolations of irresponsibility in endless optimistic prophecies, appeals to reason, declarations of faith in science, denunciations of religion, which did not produce a single sound, new idea in all the last thirty years of his life.

It is easy to see why a man like this, torn from his environmental roots, trying desperately to identify with another class, and frightened by the unexpected materialisation of his own devils, should have lost all the integrality which is necessary for a good novelist. Of his two original sources of inspiration, imaginative scientific speculation pointed to the kind of horrifying eventualities whose possibility he no longer wished to admit, while his lower middle-class environment had been abandoned many years before in the search for social betterment. Not a single novel he wrote after 1914 is worthy of comparison with the eight good novels out of the ten volumes in this Penguin edition. The most valuable books of this post-war period were his popularisations of history and of elementary scientific knowledge, but such works do not come within the present survey. They merely indicate that the man who had produced the best novels of his age had declined to a talented compiler, a clever journalist.

There is perhaps no more tragic event in modern English literature than the decay of Wells as a novelist, yet in his time he wrote sufficient first-class books to win him a permanent place both among the great imaginative romancers of our literature, and also among the patient documenters of the lives of the poor. What he might have done in better circumstances is lost even to speculation; what he did for a period was great, and we should accept these achievements for what they are worth in themselves. To have written the early Wells novels is something which, in a historical perspective, will counterbalance all the miserable bungling that ended in the sordid literary betrayals of Wells's last years.

POEM—Charles Fox

He plucked a daisy from the snow,
he laid a rose upon the bier,
grief pulled his hands like yielding dough
to lie long-fingered, pointing where
time gaped like a grave. The bell tolls
seven times, and the ochreous sky
echoes its woe with seven gulls
wheeling like nightmares to their prey.
Gone is the daisy, gone the rose;
where love was, there the hawthorn grows.

D. S. Savage

A Note on Social Responsibility

Most often the issues that are debated in our serious press are presented in a way which obscures the vital point, the obscurity consists in the uncertainty which persists as to whether the polemist is operating from a point which is below or above the position which he assails. The initial error in such cases is in the supposition that all existences, and therefore all positions relating to them, are on the same level. Yet, to take a few examples, it is possible for an individual to be above or below Law, Conventional Morality, Patriotism, and the rest. To fail to recognize this elementary truth is to do no service to clear thinking.

Perhaps nowhere does greater confusion reign than in the controversy which still continues concerning the responsibility towards society of the conscious individual, and in particular the writer. The advocates of 'social responsibility'—by which is actually meant deliberate and conscious involvement in the political systems which are contesting for the government of society—urge upon the writer, for the health of his life and work, a departure from preoccupation with his merely personal concerns for the sake of a larger concern—society as a whole. In their emphasis upon responsibility they assume, of course, the irresponsibility of the non-political man. Is this in fact a legitimate assumption? It may be or it may not. For the moment, I am concerned to point out a significant omission in the urgings to 'social responsibility'—the omission of the middle term. For when the matter is seriously examined it becomes clear that the central issue in any man's life is not at all in the choice between becoming a political being or remaining a private individual, but in accepting personal responsibility for his life, his actions, and his relationships, or refusing it. The omission of this crucial factor is of the greatest significance in this particular controversy. What, then, of this missing term? Two conclusions suggest themselves: that the movement towards social responsibility automatically takes personal responsibility in its stride, or, alternatively and contrarily, that the direct movement from individuality to sociality constitutes an evasion of the crucial term and is thus in effect a perpetuation of irresponsibility. This last I believe to be usually the case. It is possible then, it appears, to be below 'social responsibility', in the sense of being relaxed in aimless, self-centred inertia. But it is also possible to be beyond it—to have reached a position from which such inertia and such participation appear equally beside the point, equally inadequate to the real demands of human existence. And this is a fact

which the advocates of 'social responsibility' cannot, in the nature of things, comprehend.

Since for us in England this particular debate as it affects literature was introduced by the Auden group of the 'thirties, it may be enlightening to reconsider the question in its origins, and first of all in its psychological origins. For Auden himself, social awareness was part of total movement of revulsion from unhealthy introversion towards external identification with, or attachment to, the libidinous flow of biological, and thence of social, Life: his early poems hymned the praise of healthy extroversion. Auden spoke so forcefully to certain contemporaries precisely because his situation echoed theirs: an initial morbid self-involvement common enough in adolescence and not infrequently perpetuated beyond the normal term of immaturity. If it is permissible to generalize from Auden it would appear beyond reasonable doubt that the 'social responsibility' of the writers of the 'thirties signified an escape from the self—a compulsive, compensatory movement for an initially exaggerated self-involvement, which, however, as an object of shame, was kept for the most part strictly concealed. One can see the process plainly in many of those writers, but perhaps the clearest, because least complicated case is furnished by Louis MacNiece.

It is now possible to see how MacNiece's whole output stands in a direct relationship to the, for him, central problem of social awareness and responsibility. In his first book, *Blind Fireworks,* the initial introversion is not concealed: here is a poetry of lonely fantasy, with the recurrent Narcissus motif—that of involved, isolated subjectivity. In the *Poems,* this is modified by an awareness of the reality and the claims of the external, social world: the values of the poems, however, oscillate between happiness—security and unhappiness—disaster. In such poems as "Aubade" MacNiece was writing, typically:

> *Having bitten on life like a sharp apple*
> *Or, playing it like a fish, been happy,*
>
> *Having felt with fingers that the sky is blue,*
> *What have we after that to look forward to?*
>
> *Not the twilight of the gods by a precise dawn*
> *Of sallow and grey bricks, and newsboys crying war.*

The conscious hedonism was accompanied, where it was appropriate, by a gesture of studied indifference towards the threatening future, as in "Wolves":

> *I do not want to be a tragic or philosophic chorus*
> *But to keep my eye only on the nearer future*
> *And after that let the sea flow over us.*

With his growing recognition of the external reality, however, which had its strengthening effect upon his work, there developed the uneasy social conscience of the privileged good-timer, and as the sense

of doom moved from the personal (*Twilight of the Gods*) to the general (war and revolution) background, MacNiece's attitude towards society vacillated between an insouciant *"après moi le déluge"* and a gathering, nervous feeling that something ought to be done about it. The two movements are present in *The Earth Compels*, the one, rising to hysteria in "Bagpipe Music" ("It's no go the Yogi-Man, it's no go Blavatsky, All we want is a bank balance and a bit of skirt in a taxi") and the other coming to a head in the "Eclogue from Iceland", which discusses at length the individual's relationship to a depraved society, and concludes that despite the "cosmic purposelessness" (and hence, of course, individual meaninglessness) human dignity demanded nevertheless some gesture of responsibility:

> *Minute your gesture but it must be made—*
> *Your hazard, your act of defiance and hymn of hate,*
> *Hatred of hatred, assertion of human values,*
> *Which is now your only duty . . . and . . . your only chance.*

With the "Crisis" of 1938 the matter took a decisive turn, and *Autumn Journal* records the shock of an ugly reality which can no longer be waved away. It is a moving document of the bourgeois good-timer's late realization of implication in the general scheme, but the movement it initiates is, as it so often is in such cases, conditioned by its antecedents. Instead of a total conversion to responsibility and a new life it takes the weak, peripheral form of "taking an active interest in politics", and the poet motors to Oxford to canvass for the Collective Security Liberal in opposition to an Appeasement Conservative candidate at the bye-election. It was on this attenuated impetus that MacNiece later became involved in Government war propaganda. Thus his social responsibility took him, not in opposition to the valueless world, but precisely in identification with it—to a point he would have reached anyway, floating passively on the stream of events. The result for his work as a poet has not been fortunate. Nor is the record of his contemporaries in this respect—Auden, Spender and the rest—any more inspiring. It is perhaps even less so.

Here we have a very simple but quite genuine case of an individual's indubitable conversion, clearly a crucial experience in his life, to 'social responsibility'. And, in spite of its extreme simplicity, it seems to me to demonstrate perfectly the basic oversimplification which is at the root of all the 'political' exhortations to the individual to wake up and toe the social line. I have already said it: it leaves out the middle term. Can a man step directly from personal irresponsibility (which, with all deference, is an exact description of MacNiece's old self-centred hedonism) into social responsibility? Must one not, in reality, take one's old irresponsibility along with one? This is the fatal weakness of the whole liberal-socialist position, which with unreasoning optimism, assumes that a more general participation in politics, with no regard to the moral quality of the participators, will necessarily be good in its effects. Something called "socialism" is assumed to be a good, without reference to the personal quality of

its adherents, so that conversion to socialism means merely a change of opinions. But a fascist, and a communist, and a "democrat" may be equally "socially responsible"—and is, or is not, a nation at war a nation of "socially responsible" individuals? A great deal of confusion could be avoided if people could only understand that "politics" may have only the flimsiest connection with moral values, with 'the good', being always a scuffle for material stakes, and in its methods opportunistic and coercive to the last degree. Such scuffling, in an evil and unjust world, may be a necessity: it has nothing to do with the writer's responsibility, which operates in the primary realm of human values.

No one has tied himself into more intricate knots in an effort to reconcile artistic integrity with "social responsibility" than Stephen Spender. In a recent essay entitled "Modern Writers in the World of Necessity", Spender again awkwardly advances to rephrase his comments upon this dilemma. I will attempt to summarize his arguments.

"The inner world of personality," Spender declares, "is certainly the most important reality we know, but . . ."—and here's the rub—". . . but unless it can be related to the outer world, all attempts to develop it only reveal its isolation and weakness." That, of course, all depends on what you mean by the outer world. Here it is the "world of necessity" which, in Spender's view, is the legacy of "the fascists in their downfall".

> It is the curse of a necessity which hangs over everyone and everything, justifying conscription, economies, censorship, discipline, because there is a continual crisis in the world which can only be solved by the most ruthless use of governmental power . . . Any government now . . . must control and ration and organize at home, while approving of equally strong measures in its foreign policy abroad, to bring world order out of the chaos left by fascism . . .
>
> But what is necessary for society in a state of emergency hardly ever coincides with the wishes of the individual, precisely because the margin which distinguishes an individual personality from a mere economic and social unit almost disappears in a society undergoing continual crisis. To-day, people notice the gap between the massive public activities which are directed in the interests of all, and yet which coincide exactly with no one's wishes for himself, and the eccentric, yet creative needs of individual self-expression. Government becomes more and more concerned with imperative necessity, an either/or meaning that unless individuals act as is required of them, consciously suppressing their desire to express themselves extravagantly, they will be romantic rebels against the measures necessary to feed and clothe the victims of the war, and to prevent further wars.

"Thus," Spender continues, "personalities and causes are made insignificant by the perception of necessity . . . In this world of necessity, there is danger of the individual who clings to personal values becoming cynical and apathetic . . . In the post-war world

dominated by the god of necessity, it seems likely that many people will turn away from politics and seek to construct small worlds out of their private relationships, based on personal values. In doing this, these people will be imitating art . . . The attempt to-day to be a pure artist, having renounced all political connections with society . . . is simply a failure to be conscious of the artist's position in the modern world." Every view of life to-day, Spender goes on to announce, has social implications. Recent artistic movements have "attempted to develop an artistic aim split off from the modern social problem. Yet . . . social implications are involved even in the most personal or private work." D. H. Lawrence's attempt to avoid the social problem "put him in sympathy with the repressive lords of blood and soil" instead of with the miners of Nottingham, as would otherwise have been (!) the case, and, "As with Lawrence, so with the Imagists, the Symbolists, the Surrealists, the Apocalyptics, the Personalists: there is an attempt to embrace any reality, however narrow, remote, violent, neurotic, visionary, private or mad, so long as it can be appealed to as part of an inner world of individuality more important and durable than the external world which seems outside the control of the individual." The inner world of personality is the most important reality we know; but (and this is the central muddle of an incredibly muddled and badly-phrased argument):

> This inner world is the world of civilization, but civilization is a reality in society, it is not just personal relatonships, jokes between friends, surrealist extravagances, sex nightmare and mysteries. Whoever cares for it must fight to achieve it not only in his life but also in society.

There follows a backward, approving glance at the literary politicism of the 'thirties, and then this typical conclusion:

> In the partly managerial, partly socialistic society, dominated by necessity, of the immediate future, the intelligentsia will be in a position in which . . . their work will have an unprecedented influence, because it will be almost the only outlet of free self-expression in a world where most commodities and employments are rigidly controlled. There are two directions in which their thought may develop . . . One is already adumbrated in the vague movement called 'personalism'. The theme of this and similar tendencies is that society has nothing to offer which can satisfy any individual: the scale of power politics, planning, controls, etc., is quite unrelated to the human scale of separate individuals: the only reality to which we can cling is that of personal values . . . Views such as this (show that) . . . a good many people have learned nothing from the war except to hate control and conscription . . .
>
> The other tendency . . . springs from the literature written during the Occupation. It is a literature of resistance, of hope, of faith, active and full of energy, which is yet not imprisoned within the limited and material aims of any political party. It is a poetry of writers such as Eluard, Aragon, Jouve, Emmanuel, Seghers, and others who have integrated their personal vision

with an understanding of the absolutely essential tasks confronting the poet as the most fully conscious member of society. In these writers, the gulf which separated the private, personal, anti-social aspect of the poet and the political aspect seems to have been bridged. The tendency is toward integration of the idea of the separate personality with that of the social being. As a result of this integration, these writers are not the intellectual by-products of politics. In other words, they aim at the expression of personality and the freedom of the imagination, while they also recognize their responsibility toward society. They create an ideal above politics, which political movements should seek to interpret in action.

This extraordinary production illustrates the hopeless bewilderment of thought and confusion of expression which follows the substitution of "social" for personal responsibility. First of all there is arbitrarily posited a "world of necessity" in which the individual is rendered outwardly impotent by the "necessary" surrender of all power to an external government. Thus handcuffed, chained and fettered (all, of course, in his own interests, and with his own, democratic consent) he may be foolishly tempted to retreat into a cowardly, aesthetic "personalism". But if, in that case, he expresses his personalism in an antipathy to external control, conscription, etc., he is rapped on the knuckles at once, for he simply shows that he has learned nothing from the War. (Presumably what he should have learned was to adapt himself to the totalitarian organization of the belligerent State.) Thus, he must now willingly abase himself before the amoral external authority, accepting all its "necessary", paternal controls and restrictions, allowing himself to be moved about like a physical object from without. But that is not the end of it: there is that troublesome artistic conscience to be taken into account. The inner world, confusedly identified with "the world of civilization" (I had always thought this to be, by definition, the outer world), is not, after all, something private but "a reality in society", and whoever cares for it must fight to achieve it in society. (Five shillings to any reader who can explain this to me.) It seems, then, that he must, after all, take social action—in a society which, by his own consent, has already bound him hand and foot and yoked him to the state machine, thus effectively, one would have thought, prohibiting any action but its own! The curious, dreamlike conclusion follows that while we must submit to state control, we must at the same time adjust our personal vision to an "understanding of the absolutely essential tasks confronting the poet as the most fully conscious member of society (integrating) the idea of the separate personality with the social being." Now what in heaven's name does all this mean, if it is not, indeed, just plain twaddle? It means, of course, that Spender is a very confused and unhappy individual, but it also means- though Spender lacks the courage to say it clearly—that, in the last resort, the poet must throw aside personal values for the sake of the state and its "necessity", and then, by the conjurer's long jump of "social responsibility", arrive at the abstract region of total politics, where his

function will be . . . what, if not precisely to interpret and apologise for the State and all its activities?

Spender's essay is a good example of "social responsibility" at work. It rests upon a highly abstract and deceitful jump from the personal to the social—a jump necessitated by the unbridgeable chasm which is assumed to exist between the two realms. Since the existence of such a chasm is an implicit presupposition of all current publicism, and since that publicism is demonstrably related to a prevalent state of collective insanity leading to mass-suicide, I would like to propose in all seriousness the following question: Does this chasm in reality exist, or is it put there by the split consciousness of the psychopathic mass personality?

I find it significant that when Spender speaks of the personal life he finds it anti-social, full of surrealist extravaganzas and sex nightmares, and to be narrow, remote, violent, neurotic, visionary, private and mad. I do not recognize my own personal life in that description.

When Spender and other apologists for so-called "social responsibility" speak of "society", they do not in fact mean that system of local, personal, professional relationships in which all of us are engaged, and which forms the context of our personal lives. They mean the highly abstract, not to say fictitious realm of big business and finance, of the jockeying of factions, and of State power, which exists as a purely subjective mental construction knowable through direct experience. Their "social responsibility" means, quite simply, involvement in the machinery of coercion and intrigue which squats over and manipulates the concrete social world and forces upon its organic structure a coercive mechanical pattern in order to adapt it to the amoral ends of power. I have no wish to idealize the organic and denigrate the mechanical—I am well aware that this very pattern arises from the interpenetration of human worth by human inertia, stupidity, greed and fear. I am concerned only to elucidate the difference between real society, which is always a complex of concrete human relationships, however distorted by the penetration of hypnotic abstractions, and the wholly abstract and impersonal realm of the state and politics, which does not directly engage with our personal lives, except in the non-human shape of the official (who is never personally responsible, you will find), and which we can never grasp as concrete reality, but to attain which we are asked to make an abstract leap *over* the intervening personal-social realm. Whether or not that sort of abstract "social responsibility" can ever have any good result will be decided by the individual according to his view of the desirability or otherwise of Government as such, that concentration of social power in the hands of a class of rulers, which is its outcome and meaning. My own view happens to be that Government, as the impersonal entity which is the outcome of the political activities of a minority possessed by a neurotic, ungovernable will to power, is always bad and often ruinous—especially when it opposes itself, as it inevitably does, to other Governments and you have the crowning insanity of war—but that Governments arise and gain power proportionately to the

inertia and depravity of the people who allow themselves to be so ruled. For myself, since I am a personally and not a socially responsible individual, I do not need to be told how to order my life by some official, and for the same reason I do not wish to sit on a committee to coerce other people into ordering theirs according to some official idea of my own. Consequently I will do nothing whatever to put any Government in power, or to sanction it while it is in power—which is equivalent to detaching myself from political activities —and equally I will do nothing to pull it from power. Where, however, Government coercion conflicts with my inner apprehension of right and wrong, and, especially, when I am expected to get rid of my personal responsibility and attach myself to some conscienceless exterior obedience, I shall be bound to resist it—*personally*—and then I shall, involuntarily, be carrying the values of my interior existence, such as they are, into the abstract political realm. This happens, especially, with the pacifist—the conscientious objector—in time of conscription and war—but Spender and his friends wouldn't know anything about that.

Thus, it appears, Spender and others of his persuasion are not really urging upon the rest of us a genuine social responsibility, which, by the nature of things, since it is the impact of the responsible individual upon the world, must always be the outcome of an initial acceptance of personal responsibility: no, they are urging, in effect, a personal and a social irresponsibility, a withdrawal from the struggle for the moralization of the daemoniacal collective, and an active and inert acquiescence in the totalitarian power of the state and its drive to war. The wholly unreal dualism of Spender's outlook is shown nowhere more than in the tell-tale disparity of his statement that, "Whoever cares for (the inner world) must fight to achieve it not only in his life but also in society." Is his life, then, not lived within the social context? This strange distinction in itself would reveal the neurotic basis of the unbridgeable personal-social dualism: it is the wording of an unhappy introvert, conscious of his isolation from the human realm, attempting an exaggerated compensation for it by a total extrusion of the inchoate self into the "real" world of "the public", yet yanked back again to the personal by the nagging, unavoidable obligations of an artistic conscience not yet—it is the one hopeful sign in a bad case—*entirely* surrendered to the politicians.

Spender is right in associating artistic creativeness with personal reality: that much he has managed to grasp in a literary career of fifteen years. Why not, then, have the courage of his artistic convictions and build on them? In other words, embrace what he so inadequately rejects, the doctrine of personalism?

Personalism may mean different things, according to one's own development and understanding. For me, it does not mean an attempt to embrace a narrow, etc., reality which can be "appealed to as part of an inner world of individuality more important and durable than the external world", nor does it imply the renunciation of all connections with society—how could it? It means first of all the becoming of the self through a decisive inner movement of relationship

to the realm of transcendent being and value; the consequent responsible acceptance of one's personal and unique destiny in the world and of responsibility for others; and, in "political" terms, the resolute (and, even, if we have it in us, the sacrificial and heroic) extension of the values of personal existence throughout the de-personalized, loveless and desolate world. With a spit in the eye for Spender's rotten little "god of necessity".

Yet all this must be incomprehensible to the individual who has not faithfully grasped his own personal reality, who has not achieved even the foreshadowing of spiritual wholeness, but is condemned therefore to an inner division which forces an irreconcilable antithesis between the subjective and the objective realms. One comes to understand how the urge towards a fantastic sociality is not only an escape from the task of finding the self which alone is capable of uniting inner and outer being, but is concurrently a chimerical attempt to locate in that fictitious entity, society-as-a-whole, the purpose and meaning which elude the passive individualist in his private and isolated subjectivity, with its background, to quote MacNiece again, of "cosmic purposelessness". The proponents of "social responsibility" have failed to press at the right point, and all their declamations will not convince us that their sickness is sound health, their disintegrality, integrity, and their personal surrender responsibility and creative potency. There is a central and primary question which, in any human life which aspires to self-realization and authenticity, must be settled first. Otherwise one is lost in the labyrinthine ways of a "necessity" which, dragging the footsteps from dishonour to dishonour, knows no conscience, no meaning, no law, no purpose and no end.

Patricia Johnson

The Choice

As the occupants of the compartment began to settle themselves for the long journey, they took note, unobstrusively, of course, of their companions.

Surprisingly, the carriage was not crowded, and the six travellers were able to stretch their limbs and scatter their belongings comfortably around them.

The young man with the pale thin face, and the bilious yellow shirt, twined himself into a corner of the carriage and opened his book. A fair lock of hair disentangled itself from the mass that covered his skull, and hung enchantingly over his creased brow. The good tweed jacket he wore was shabby and thin round the elbows, and his cord trousers were dirty and crumpled. His teeth, on the other hand, which showed every now and then when he smiled at some particularly preposterous statement in the book, were white and well-cared for.

Next to this elegant and charming person, his neighbour appeared earthy in extreme. He is a well-built man of about thirty, broad of shoulder and wide of hip. His head seemed almost round in shape and his cheeks were tinged with a healthy boyish pink. A scarlet tie snaked its way challengingly from inside his striped navy jacket, and spurted itself over most of his stomach. While he smoked the limp cigarettes he rolled in his own thick fingers, his eyes roved the carriage, as though longing to probe his companions into conversation.

Next to him, in the corner, sat a young woman. She was not beautiful, nor yet was she exactly plain. You noticed at once that her eyes were blue and that her mouth looked soft and kind. For the rest, her face was a colourless oval, framed in a smudge of brown hair. She stared out of the window, hardly moving her position. There was an expression of exquisite sorrow in her face, a distant thoughtful gaze, which seemed somehow to concentrate all the sadness of the world in a single glance.

Opposite her sat a middle-aged woman, earnestly knitting a complicated garment in a dullish, thick wool. The needles stuck out from between her fingers like a bright agile porcupine. Her own dress was hand-knitted, and hung slackly about her body, except where it clung too tightly to her breasts. At the end of each line of knitting, she took a pencil from behind her ear and a small piece of paper from her bag and made a strange sign.

The middle-aged man next to her was obviously her husband. They had the kind of resemblance that people have from living for many years together. He was dressed, unaccountably, in shorts. His legs stuck thick and round from their meagre covering, and were covered with thick, wiry hairs. He was reading a small, closely printed pamphlet, holding it very close to the rimless spectacles which balanced on his nose.

Next to him, his eyes closed in sleep, sat an old man with a snowy mane of hair and a pointed white beard.

The train clattered on its journey. Green fields, villages and towns, flashed a cinematograph impression on the window. The old gentleman slept, the man in shorts read, his wife knitted, bilious-shirt sniggered softly over his book, and red-tie could bear it no longer.

"This *is* a treat," he said, at last, and his words hissed like a falling bomb into the silence of the compartment. "To get into a train where you can actually spread out, I mean." His voice hesitated and faded away.

The knitting woman looked up and smiled, the benign old gentleman opened one eye and nodded, and the others continued their occupations.

A stream of white smoke curled past the window.

"One thing about the war," said red-tie, bravely, "it's brought us together, if you know what I mean. Made everyone more friendly."

"I confess I can't really see that it has," said bilious-shirt, tossing the curl out of his eye, but making certain that it would fall back into place again. "Seems to me that the world's going completely mad. I wouldn't exactly call it more *friendly*."

"No," answered red-tie, relieved beyond measure that he had drawn some response. "I agree with you there, chum. The world's certainly in a terrible mess. But I mean at home here—in everyday life—people talk to each other more than they did. It's the bombing that done it. Made people realise that there's more to life than just class and money. And we'll never go back on it, mark my words, chum."

"Shan't we?" said bilious-shirt with a sniff. "I wonder!"

"I think our friend here," said the man in shorts, "is right on the whole. We are more friendly than we were. The social barriers are certainly breaking down a bit."

"Yes," said his wife, brightly, "that's quite right."

"Would you agree, miss?" asked the old gentleman, opening his eyes, rather to everyone's amazement, and nodding towards the young woman.

She drew her gaze reluctantly from the window and seemed to be about to pretend that she had heard the conversation, and then changed her mind.

"I'd say that it is perhaps the only good thing that has come out of the war," she said in a low, dreamy voice. "We are so stupid all of us. It takes a war to teach us."

Bilious-shirt gave a loud snort and his book fell with a plop on the floor.

"Typical female sentimentality," he said, rudely. "If you only had the sense to see it, you'd realise that it's all phoney from beginning to end. All this talk about love and brotherhood, is as false as democracy itself. It doesn't mean a thing. Man is primarily a selfish beast and he's not capable of spontaneous good. He doesn't change his spots in the middle of a war even to please our propagandists."

"Oh dear," said the middle-aged lady. "What a very pessimistic young man you are."

Bilious-shirt looked gratified.

"At least," he said, tossing his exquisite Greek god profile, "at least, I'm honest."

"I don't know about that," said red-tie, rolling a cigarette with a practised hand. "I think you're just deceiving yourself, chum. Now, if you belonged to some kind of organisation—the right one, mind you—you'd learn that there is such a thing as comradeship and brotherly love. There are people in the world who're willing to fight together for the benefit of humanity."

"Too bad," said bilious-shirt, slyly, "that so much of humanity gets killed while they're saying it."

"That's because you don't understand," said red-tie, patiently. "Why don't you join the Party and find out for yourself?"

"I did," said bilious-shirt. "When I was so high. But I grew out of it."

"It isn't really necessary, my friends," said the man in shorts, with a mildly evangelical smile, "to belong to a political party in order to understand the meaning of life. There is enough in the world around us to teach us all we want to know. It is for us to

seek it earnestly and with faith. We must allow ourselves to be guided by the mysterious forces of our spiritual past. Then, indeed, do we learn what it means to feel our lives motivated by the whole wonderful universe of man." On the last word he gave a little spring on the carriage seat, which carried him gaily a few inches into the air.

"Don't you think," said his wife, earnestly, "that in the family life we have the basis for the whole of humanity? I've seen so much of life in my own family. I've watched my children grow; learning to walk and to talk, to reason and to explore. And I've always wondered at the beauty of it. Why don't we inculcate this family love into those around us, use it as the basis of our social life? Our problems could be solved so easily." She sighed deeply and the silver porcupine stood still in her hands for a second.

"I don't like my family," said red-tie, seriously.

"I loathe mine," said bilious-shirt, with a shiver.

"And how would our young friend answer that one?" asked the old gentleman, gently drawing the young woman into the conversation, once more.

"I hardly know what to say," said the young lady with a ravishing blush which quite transformed her face. "I don't know anything about politics, or philosophy and I have no family of my own." She paused and lowered her eyes, then said quietly: "I just try to live each day to the best of what I know."

"Bravo," said the old gentleman, obviously very affected by this little confession and sank back into his seat again.

"How on earth do you do that?" asked bilious-shirt, incredulously, yet with respect in his voice.

She regarded him gravely for a moment, while the others in the carriage watched them both.

"I think," she said softly, "it is some other power than my own. Some conviction that I have a task to do. Ever since I was a small child I have felt like this and because of it I have devoted my whole life to relieving the suffering of others. In the colonies, in the East End of London, and Spain. And during the war I have done my best to help those who were less fortunate than myself." She frowned slightly and looked round at her companions. "I've never spoken of of these things before," she said. "I don't know why I am telling you this now. I think it was the old gentleman . . ."

The old gentleman nodded his head in the silence that followed.

"I must say," said red-tie, solemnly, "I admire you for what you've done, lady. 'Specially that bit in Spain. I wish I'd been able to go there myself, but at the time I had my hands full with propaganda work." He smiled deprecatingly, and one saw at once that there would indeed have been no-one to save in Spain if it had not been for the propaganda in England. "You see, we have the same ideas as yourself." He rolled another cigarette, and then jerked it in her direction. "And if only we could all work together, we could get something done."

"Such as liquidating those who oppose you," suggested bilious-shirt, mildly. "A second Russian Revolution, in fact."

"Don't listen to him, lady," advised red-tie, quickly. "He's a defeatist, that's wot he is. Russia's a great example to us all."

"It's an example alright," agreed bilious-shirt, and cast his eyes heavenwards.

"Come, come," said the man in shorts. "There's no need to bring Russia into every discussion under the sun. It's the individual man that's important. You are well on the way to ridding man of his individuality if you give him financial security and make him part of a social machine. You can't judge the world in terms of mechanical or economic progress any more than you can judge time in terms of a century. It is spiritual enlightenment that we must seek. And if we seek it earnestly enough we shall be guided by our spiritual leaders who are available to help us."

His wife, who had listened to his words without hesitating in her knitting, looked up as he finished and smiled encouragingly.

"I think you're on an impractical line there, sir," said bilious-shirt. "There's no point in confusing our minds with the esoteric philosophies. If we are honest with ourselves, we must admit that it is only a way of escape from ourselves. From what we learn from our own experiences."

"Experiences!" cried the young lady, with a twinkling chuckle. "What do you know about experience?"

"Plenty," said bilious-shirt, trying hard to look as though he meant it.

"I expect," said the bearded gentleman in the corner, "that we have all had experience of some kind or other. The point is, I think, to discover whether we have done anything to enrich the experience of humanity."

"Put like that," said red-tie slowly, as though under compulsion, "it's difficult to say. Most of my life has been dictated by the demands of my Party. When I am working hard, or attending meetings, I know that I am right. Yet, there have been times lately, when a strange feeling of doubt has come into my mind." He looked round sharply at the carriage door, as though he expected to see someone there. His voice sank almost to a murmur. "I shall regret saying this," he said, "but I have wondered lately whether I am working for the enrichment of humanity, or . . . the reverse."

"Cheer up," said bilious-shirt, with a friendly smile. "*I've* spent my whole life dodging what my experience taught me to be wrong. I've committed adultery, stolen, deceived and exploited my friends and been a hypocrite most of my life."

"If this is to be a time for confessions," said the middle-aged lady, tucking the pencil neatly behind her ear, "I must say, that although, at the time, I thought I was working for the best, I have realised since how wrong I was. I tried to bring up my family in the best possible way. I promised myself that I should never make the mistake with my children which my parents made with me. And in so doing, I have smothered them with love, killed their initiative with kindness, and bound them always close to me with a possessive affection."

"And your husband?" queried the old gentleman, who was obviously extremely interested in the discussion.

The man in shorts appeared to be wrapt in a deep contemplation. However, he opened his eyes and removed the large hand from his forehead at the question.

"I was just thinking," he said, with an expressive sigh, "that there are many lifetimes of pain before me. There is a great deal of wickedness in this and former lives of mine which must be worked out before my soul can be free." He looked down at his wife, as he said this, with a proprietary air. "I shall be comforted, however, by the knowledge that wheresoever I may go I shall be accompanied by my loved one."

The young woman listened with an expression of wonder in her starry blue eyes to each one of these singular speeches. There was a pause as several pairs of eyes turned towards her.

"Well . . ." she stammered, trembling with shyness. "I . . . I . . . don't think there is anything that I have consciously done wrong in my life."

"Hurrah!" cried the benign old gentleman, to everyone's astonishment. And then continued even more surprisingly: "I could have laid a bet on it. I knew it! Oh, I knew it!" As he spoke he leaned forward and took the young lady by the hand. "Now, my dear, you can come along with me."

But as he moved the other passengers discerned, for the first time, the curved horns that sprung oddly from behind his ears. He turned to lift his dispatch case from the rack and they saw the long tail swinging below his alpaca coat, before their horrified gaze. There could be no question of it . . . the benign old gentleman was the very Devil himself!

He opened the door and was about to step through it, with the young lady at his side, into swiftly moving space, when bilious-shirt sprang to his feet.

"If you must take someone," he said, "why not take one of us? You heard with your own ears that each of us sinned. Except for the lady at your side. *She*, you must realize, has lived an entirely blameless life."

"Thank you," said the Devil, "but I have made my choice for very good reasons. I could not take yourself, for instance, for in spite of all your claims to the contrary, you are, alas, an idealist. Your sort would be too upsetting in my world, by far."

"As for red-tie" he continued, seeing that gentleman rise to his feet, "I can't do with religion where I'm going."

"And our philosopher and his wife . . . not on your life, can't stand bores, myself."

"But why must you take *her*?" cried bilious-shirt, voicing the puzzlement of his companions.

"That," said the Devil, "you must think out for yourselves. Though it was obvious from the start that she was the only one. Besides," he continued, with a particularly fiendish grin, "she believes in me. Don't you, my angel?"

As he spoke she appeared to wake up from a dream. She shook bilious-shirt's restraining hand from her shoulder, and grasped the Devil firmly by the arm. Then she turned to the others in the carriage.

"Please," she said, urgently, "please let me go. Don't try to dissuade him. You don't understand. I've had such a dreadfully dull life . . . and now . . ."

"You see?" said the Devil.

And they both disappeared from sight.

NOW BACK NUMBERS

These Issues, containing the following important items, are still available, in small quantities

No. 4 George Woodcock: **The Writer and Politics.** Dwight Macdonald: **The Psychology of Killing.** D. S. Savage: **E. M. Forster and the Dilemma of Liberalism.** Victor Serge: **The Revolution at Dead End.**

No. 5 Herbert Read: **Greeks and Barbarians.** Henry Miller: **Obscenity and the Law of Reflection.** Julian Symons: **The End of a War.** Louis Adeane: **The Double Man.**

No. 6 George Orwell: **How the Poor Die.** Camillo Berneri: **Nietzsche as anti-Nietzsche.** George Woodcock: **Graham Greene.** John Hewetson: **Beethoven and Liberty. Reproductions of Paintings by Jankel Adler.**

No. 7 Alex Comfort: **Literary Sadism.** André Breton: **Colours of Liberty.** Julian Symons: **Freedom and Reality.** D. S. Savage vs. Jack Lindsay: **The Function of Poetry. Reproductions of Drawings by André Masson.**

No. 8 Herbert Read: **Chains of Freedom.** Roy Fuller: **Arnold's Poetic Object.** Paul Mattick: **Stalin, Trotsky and Lenin.** Derek Stanford: **Rights of the Imagination.**

Paul Mattick

Stalin, Trotsky & Lenin

(II)

The fact that the relentless struggle for position came into the open only after Lenin's death suggests something other than the Soviet Thermidor. It simply indicates that by that time the Bolshevik state was of sufficient strength, or was in a position, to disregard to a certain degree both the Russian masses and the international bourgeoisie. The developing bureaucracy began to feel sure that Russia was theirs for keeps; the fight for the plums of the Revolution entered its more general and more serious stage.

All adversaries in this struggle stressed the need of dictatorship in view of the unsolved internal frictions between "workers" and "peasants", the economic and technological backwardness of the country as a whole, and the constant danger of attack from the outside. But within this setting of dictatorship, all sorts of arguments could be raised. The power-struggle within the developing ruling class expressed itself in policy-proposals either for or against the interests of the peasants, either for or against the limitation of factory councils, either for or against an offensive policy on the international front. High-sounding theories were expounded with regard to the estimation of the peasantry, the relationship between bureaucracy and revolution, the question of party generations, etc., and reached their climax in the Trotsky-Stalin controversy on the "Permanent Revolution" and the theory of "Socialism in one Country".

It is quite possible that the debators believed their own phrases; yet, despite their theoretical differentiations, whenever they acted upon a real situation they all acted alike. In order to suit their own needs, they naturally expressed identical things in different terms. If Trotsky rushes to the front—to all fronts in fact—he merely defends the fatherland. But Stalin "is attracted by the front, because here for the first time he could work with the most finished of all the administrative machines, the military machine" (295) for which, by the way, Trotsky claims all credit. If Trotsky pleads for discipline, he shows his "iron hand"; if Stalin does the same, he deals with a "heavy hand". If Trotsky's bloody suppression of the Kronstadt Rebellion was a "tragic necessity" (337), Stalin's suppression of the Georgian independence movement is in the manner of a "great-Russian Russifier, riding roughshod over the rights of his own people as a nation" (360). And *vice versa*: suggestions made by Trotsky are called false and counter-revolutionary by Stalin's henchmen; when carried out under Stalin's auspices, they become additional proof of the great leader's wisdom.

To understand Bolshevism, and in a narrower sense Stalinism, it is not enough to follow the superficial and often silly controversies between Stalinists and Trotskyites. After all, the Russian Revolution embraces more than just the Bolshevik Party. It was not even initiated by organized political groups but by spontaneous reactions of the masses to an unbearable and apparently endless misery connected with the breakdown of an already precarious economic system in the wake of an unsuccessfully waged war. The February upheavals "started" with hunger riots in market places, protest strikes in factories, and the spontaneous declaration of solidarity with the rioters on the part of the soldiers. But all spontaneous movements in modern history have been accompanied by organized forces. As soon as the collapse of Czarism was imminent, organizations came to the fore with directives and definite political goals.

If prior to the Revolution Lenin had stressed organization rather than spontaneity, it was because of the retarded Russian conditions, which gave the

spontaneous movements a backward character. Even the politically advanced groups offered only limited programs. The industrial workers desired capitalistic reforms similar to those enjoyed by the workers in more capitalistically advanced countries. The petty-bourgeoisie and important layers of the capitalist class wanted a Western bourgeois democracy. The peasants desired land in a capitalist agriculture. Though progressive for Czarist Russia, these demands were of the essence of bourgeois revolution.

The new liberalistic February government attempted to continue the war. But it was the conditions of war against which the masses were rebelling. All promised reforms within the Russian setting of that time and within the existing imperialistic power relationships were doomed to remain empty phrases; there was no way of directing the spontaneous movements into those channels desired by the government. In new upsurges the Bolsheviks came into power not by way of a *second revolution* but by a forced change of government. This seizure of power was made easy by the lack of interest that the restless masses were showing in the existing government. The October *coup*, as Lenin said, "was easier than lifting a feather". The final victory was "practically achieved by default . . . Not a single regiment rose to defend Russian democracy . . . The struggle for supreme power over an empire that comprised one-sixth of the terrestrial globe was decided between amazingly small forces on both sides in the provinces as well as in the two capital cities" (239)

The Bolsheviks did not try to restore the old conditions in order to reform them, but declared themselves in favour of the *concrete* results of the conceptually backward spontaneous movements: the ending of the war, the workers' control of industry, the expropriation of the ruling classes and the division of land. And so they stayed in power. The backwardness of the masses had not prevented them from acting in a forward way, for in Russia the time for concessions to the suffering and exploited masses was past. In the turmoil of war and defeat there was no room for capitalistic reforms of the traditional type.

The pre-revolutionary demands of the Russian masses had been backward for two reasons: they had long been realized in the main capitalist nations, and they could no longer be realized in view of existing world conditions. At a time when the concentration and centralization process of world capitalism had brought about the decline of bourgeois democracy almost everywhere, it was no longer possible to initiate it afresh in Russia. If *laissez faire* democracy was out of the question, so were all those reforms in capital-labour relations usually related to social legislation and trade-unionism. Capitalist agriculture, too, had passed beyond the breaking up of feudal estates and production for a capitalist market to the industrialization of agriculture and its consequent incorporation into the concentration process of capital.

The Bolsheviks did not claim responsibility for the Revolution. They gave full credit to the spontaneous movements. Of course, they underlined the obvious fact that Russia's previous history, which included the Bolshevik party, had lent some kind of vague revolutionary consciousness to the unorganised masses and they were not backward about asserting that without their leadership the course of the Revolution would have been different and most probably would have led to a counter-revolution. "Had the Bolsheviks not seized power," writes Trotsky, "the world would have had a Russian name for Fascism five years before the March on Rome" (412).

But counter-revolutionary attempts on the part of the traditional powers failed not because of any conscious direction of the spontaneous movements, not because of Lenin's "sharp eyes, which surveyed the situation correctly" (196), but because of the fact that these movements could not be diverted from their *own* course. If one wants to use the term at all, the only "counter-revolution" possible in the Russia of 1917 was that inherent in the Revolution itself, that is, in the opportunity it offered the Bolsheviks to restore a centrally directed social order for the perpetuation of the capitalistic divorce of the workers from the means of production and the consequent restoration of Russia as a competing imperialist power.

During the revolution the interests of the rebelling masses and of the Bolsheviks merged to a remarkable degree. Beyond the temporary merger,

there also existed a deep unity between the socializing concepts of the Bolsheviks and the *consequences* of the spontaneous movements. The revolutionary movement, reaching out by force of circumstances beyond the traditional confines of the bourgeois revolution, yet able only by virtue of internal and extra-Russian conditions to capitalize the nation, could realize itself only in the equally restricted and developed form of Russian state-capitalism. Too "backward" for socialism but also too "advanced" for liberal capitalism, the Revolution could end only in that consistent form of capitalism which the Bolsheviks considered a pre-condition of socialism, namely, state-capitalism.

By identifying themselves with the spontaneous movement they could not control, the Bolsheviks gained control over this movement as soon as it had spent itself in the realization of its immediate goals. There were many such goals differently reached in different territories. Varous layers of the peasantry satisfied, or failed to satisfy, divergent needs and desires. Their interests had no real connection with those of the proletariat. The working class itself was split into various groups with a variety of specific needs and general plans. The petty-bourgeoisie had still other problems to solve. In brief, there was a spontaneous unity against the conditions of Czarism and war, but there was no unity in regard to immediate goals and future policy. It was not too difficult for the Bolsheviks to utilise this social division for building up their own power, which finally became stronger than the whole of society because it never faced society as a whole.

Like the other groups which asserted themselves within the revolution, the Bolsheviks, too, pressed forward to gain their particular end—the control of government. This goal reached farther than all the other ends aspired to by other interests represented in the social upheaval. It involved a never-ending struggle, a continuous winning and re-winning of power positions. Peasant groups settled down after dividing the land, workers returned to the factories as wage-labourers, soldiers, unable to roam the country-sides forever, returned to the life of peasant and worker, but for the Bolsheviks the struggle only really began with the success of the Revolution. Like all governments, the Bolshevik regime involves submission of all existing social layers to its authority. Slowly centralizing all power and control into their hands, the Bolsheviks were soon able to dictate policy. Once more Russia became thoroughly organized in the interests of a special class—the class of privilege in the emerging system of state-capitalism.

All this has nothing to do with Stalinism and "Thermidor" but represents Lenin's and Trotsky's policy from the very day they came to power. Reporting to the Sixth Congress of Soviets in 1918, Trotsky complained that "Not all Soviet workers have understood that our administration has been centralized and that all orders issued from above must be final . . . We shall be pitiless with those Soviet workers who have not yet understood; we will remove them, cast them out of our ranks, pull them up with repressions" (291). Trotsky now claims that these words were aimed at Stalin who did not co-ordinate his war-activity properly and we are willing to believe him. But how much more directly must they have been aimed at all those who were not even "second-rate" but had no rating at all in the soviet hierarchy. There already existed, as Trotsky relates, " a sharp cleavage between the classes in motion and the interests of the party machines. Even the Bolshevik Party cadres, who enjoyed the benefit of exceptional revolutionary training were definitely inclined to disregard the masses and to identify their own special interests with the interests of the machine on the very day after the monarchy was overthrown" (204).

Trotsky holds, of course, that the dangers implied in this situation were averted by Lenin's vigilance and by objective conditions which made the "masses more revolutionary than the Party, and the Party more revolutionary than its machine" (204). But the machine was headed by Lenin. Even before the Revolution, Trotsky points out, the Central Committee of the Party "functioned almost regularly and was entirely in the hands of Lenin" (163). And even more so after the Revolution. In the Spring of 1918 the "ideal of 'democratic centralism' suffered further reverses, for in effect the power within both the government and the Party became concentrated in the hands of Lenin and the immediate retinue of Bolshevik leaders who did not openly disagree with

him and carried out his wishes" (340). As the bureaucracy made headway nevertheless, the emerging Stalinist machine must have been the result of an oversight on the part of Lenin.

To distinguish between the ruler of the machine and the machine on the one hand, and between the machine and the masses on the other implies that only the masses and the top-leader were truly revolutionary, and that both Lenin and the revolutionary masses were later betrayed by Stalin's machine which, so to speak, made itself independent. Although Trotsky needs such distinctions to satisfy his own political interests, they have no basis in fact. Until his death—disregarding occasional remarks against the dangers of bureaucratization, which for the Bolsheviks are the equivalent of the bourgeois politicians' occasional crusades for a balanced budget—Lenin never once came out against the Bolshevik Party machine and its leadership, that is, against himself. Whatever policy was decided upon received Lenin's blessing so long as he was at the helm of the machine, and he died holding that position.

Lenin's "democratic" notions are legendary. Of course, state capitalism under Lenin was different from state-capitalism under Stalin because the dictatorial powers of the latter were greater—thanks to Lenin's attempt to build up his own. That Lenin's rule was less terroristic than Stalin's is debatable. Like Stalin, Lenin catalogued *all* his victims under the heading "counter-revolutionary". Without comparing the statistics of those tortured and killed under both regimes, we will admit that the Bolshevik regime under Lenin and Trotsky was not strong enough to carry through such Stalinist measures as enforced collectivization and slave-labour camps as a main economic and political policy. It was not design but weakness which forced Lenin and Trotsky to the so-called *New Economic Policy*, that is, to concessions to private-property interests and to a greater lip-service to "democracy".

Bolshevik "toleration" of such non-Bolshevik organizations as the *Social Revolutionists* in the early phase of Lenin's rule did not spring, as Trotsky asserts, from Lenin's "democratic" inclinations but from inability to destroy all non-Bolshevik organizations at once. The totalitarian rule of the party had been the goal from the outset which implied the division of the oppositional groups in order to break them one after another. The totalitarian features of Lenin's Bolshevism were accumulating at the same rate at which its control and police power grew. That they were forced upon the Bolsheviks by the "counter-revolutionary" activity of all non-Bolshevik labour organizations, as Trotsky maintains, cannot of course explain their further increase after the crushing of the various non-conformist organizations. Neither could it explain Lenin's insistence upon the enforcement of totalitarian principles in the extra-Russian organizations of the Communist International.

Unable to blame non-Bolshevik organisations entirely for Lenin's dictatorship, Trotsky tells "those theoreticians who attempt to prove that the present totalitarian regime of the U.S.S.R. is due . . . to the ugly nature of Bolshevism itself", that they forget the years of Civil War, "which laid an indelible impress on the Soviet Government by virtue of the fact that very many of the administrators, a considerable layer of them, had become accustomed to command and demanded unconditional submission to their orders" (384). Stalin, too, he continues, "was moulded by the environment and circumstances of the Civil War, along with the entire group that later helped him to establish his personal dictatorship" (385). The Civil War, however, was initiated by the international bourgeoisie. And thus the ugly sides of Bolshevism under Lenin, as well as under Stalin, find their chief and final cause in capitalism's enmity to Bolshevism which, if it is a monster, is only a reluctant monster, killing and torturing in mere self-defense.

And so, if only in a round-about-way, Trotskv's Bolshevism, despite its saturation with hatred for Stalin, leads in the end merely to a defense of Stalinism as the only possible self-defence for Trotsky. This explains the superficiality of the ideological differences between Stalinism and Trotskyism. The impossibility of attacking Stalin without attacking Lenin helps to explain, furthermore, Trotsky's great difficulties as an oppositionist. Trosky's own past and theories precluded on his part the initiation of a movement to the *left* of Stalnism and condemned "Trotskyism" to remain a mere collecting agency

for unsuccessful Bolsheviks. As such it could maintain itself outside of Russia because of the ceaseless competitive struggles for power and positions within the so-called "communist" world-movement. But it could not achieve significance for it had nothing to offer but the replacement of one set of politicians by another. The Trotskyist defence of Russia in the Second World War was consistent with all the previous policies of this, Stalin's most bitter, but also most loyal, opposition.

Trotsky's defence of Stalinism does not exhaust itself with showing how the Civil War transformed the Bolsheviks from servants into masters of the working class. He points to the more important fact that it is the "bureaucracy's law of life and death to guard the nationalization of the means of production and of the land" (408). This means that "in spite of the most monstrous bureaucratic distortions, the class basis of the U.S.S.R. remains proletarian" (406). For a while—we notice—Stalin had Trotsky worried. In 1921, Lenin had been disturbed by the question as to whether the *New Economic Policy* was merely a "tactic" or an "evolution" (405). Because the *N.E.P.* released private-capitalistic tendencies, Trotsky saw in the growing Stalinist bureaucracy "nothing else than the first stage of bourgeois restoration" (429). But his worries were unfounded; "the struggle against equality and the establishment of very deep social differentiations has so far been unable to eliminate the socialist consciousness of the masses or the nationalization of the means of production and the land, which were the basic social conquests of the revolution" (406). Stalin, of course, had nothing to do with this, for "the Russian Thermidor would have undoubtedly opened a new era of bourgeois rule, if that rule had not proved obsolete throughout the world" (406).

With this last statement of Trotsky's we approach the essence of the matter under discussion. We have said before that the *concrete* results of the revolution of 1917 were neither socialistic nor bourgeois but state-capitalistic. It was Trotsky's belief that Stalin would destroy the state-capitalist nature of the economy in favour of a bourgeois economy. This was to be the Thermidor. The decay of bourgeois economy all over the world prevented Stalin from bringing this about. All he could do was to introduce the ugly features of his personal dictatorship into that society which had been brought into existence by Lenin and Trotsky. In this way, and despite the fact that Stalin still occupies the Kremlin, Trotskyism has triumphed over Stalinism.

It all depends on an equation of state-capitalism with socialism. And although some of Trotsky's disciples have recently found it impossible to continue making the equation, Trotsky was bound to it, for it is the beginning and the end of Leninism and, in a wider sense, of the whole of the social-democratic world-movement of which Leninism was only the more realistic part. Realistic, that is, with regard to Russia. What was, and still is, understood by this movement under "workers' state" is governmental rule by the party; what is meant by "socialism" is the nationalization of the means of production. By adding control over the economy to the political control of the government the totalitarian rule over all of society emerges in full. The government secures its totalitarian rule by way of the party, which maintains the social hierarchy and is itself a hierarchical institution.

This idea of "socialism" is now in the process of becoming discredited, but only because of the experience of Russia and similar if less extensive experiences in other countries. Prior to 1914, what was meant by the seizure of power, either peacefully or violently, was the seizure of the government machinery, replacing a given set of administrators and law-makers with another set. Economically, the "anarchy" of the capitalistic market was to be replaced by a planned production under the control of the state. As the socialist state would by definition by a "just" state, being itself controlled by the masses by way of the democratic processes, there was no reason to expect that its decisions would run counter to socialistic ideals. This theory was sufficient to organize parts of the working class into more or less powerful parties.

The theory of socialism boiled down to the demand for centralized economic planning in the interest of all. The centralization process, inherent in capital-accummulation itself, was regarded as *a socialistic* tendency. The growing influence of "labour" within the state-machinery was hailed as a step in the

direction of socialism. But actually the centralization process of capital indicated something else than its self-transformation into social property. It was indentical with the destruction of *laissez-faire* economy and therewith the end of the traditional business-cycle as the regulator of the economy. With the beginning of the 20th century the character of capitalism changed. From that time on it found itself under permanent crisis conditions which could not be resolved by the "automatic" workings of the market. Monopolistic regulations, state-interferences, national policies shifted the burden of the crisis to the capitalistically under-privileged in the world-economy. All "economic" policy became imperialistic policy, culminating twice in world-wide conflagrations.

In this situation, to reconstruct a broken-down political and economic system meant to adapt it to these now conditions. The Bolshevik theory of socialization fitted this need in an admirable way. In order to restore the national power of Russia it was necessary to do in a radical fashion what in the Western nations had been merely an evolutionary process. Even then it would take time to close the gap between the Russian economy and that of the Western powers. Meanwhile the ideology of the socialist movement served well as protection. The socialist origin of Bolshevism made it particularly fitted for the state-capitalist reconstruction of Russia. Its organizational principles, which had turned the party into a well-functioning institution, would re-establish order in the country as well.

The Bolsheviks, of course, were convinced that what they were building in Russia was, if not socialism, at least the next best thing to socialism, for they were completing the process which in the Western nations was still only the main *trend* of development. They had abolished the market-economy and had expropriated the bourgeoisie; they also had gained complete control over the government. For the Russian workers, however, nothing had changed; they were merely faced by another set of bosses, politicians, and indoctrinators. Their position equalled the workers' position in all capitalist countries during times of war. State-capitalism is a war-economy, and all extra-Russian economic systems transformed themselves into war-economies, into state-capitalistic systems fitted to the imperialistic needs of modern capitalism. Other nations did not copy all the innovations of Russian state-capitalism but only those best suited to their specific needs. The second world war led to the further unfolding of state-capitalism on a world-wide scale. The peculiarities of the various nations and their special situations within the world-power frame provided a great variety of developmental processes towards state-capitalism.

The fact that state-capitalism and fascism did not, and do not grow everywhere in a uniform manner provided Trotsky with the argument of the basic difference between bolshevism, fascism and capitalism plain and simple. This argument necessarily stresses superficialities of social development. In all essential aspects all three of these systems are identical and represent only various stages of the same developmnt—a development which aims at manipulating the mass of the population by dictatorial governments in a more or less authoritarian fashion, in order to secure the government and the privileged social layers which support it and to enable those governments to participate in the international economy of to-day by preparing for war, waging war, and profiting by war.

Trotsky could not permit himself to recognize in Bolshevism one aspect of the world-wide trend towards a fascist world-economy. As late as 1940 he held the view that Bolshevism prevented the rise of Fascism in the Russia of 1917. It should have long since been clear, however, that all that Lenin and Trotsky prevented in Russia was the use of a non-Marxian ideology for the fascist reconstruction of Russia. Because the Marxian ideology of Bolshevism merely served state-capitalistic ends, it, too, has been discredited. From any view that goes beyond the capitalistic system of exploitation Stalinism and Trotskyism are both relics of the past.

direction of socialism. But actually the centralization process of capital indicated something else than its self-transformation into social property. It was indentical with the destruction of *laissez-faire* economy and therewith the end of the traditional business-cycle as the regulator of the economy. With the beginning of the 20th century the character of capitalism changed. From that time on it found itself under permanent crisis conditions which could not be resolved by the "automatic" workings of the market. Monopolistic regulations, state-interferences, national policies shifted the burden of the crisis to the capitalistically under-privileged in the world-economy. All "economic" policy became imperialistic policy, culminating twice in world-wide conflagrations.

In this situation, to reconstruct a broken-down political and economic system meant to adapt it to these now conditions. The Bolshevik theory of socialization fitted this need in an admirable way. In order to restore the national power of Russia it was necessary to do in a radical fashion what in the Western nations had been merely an evolutionary process. Even then it would take time to close the gap between the Russian economy and that of the Western powers. Meanwhile the ideology of the socialist movement served well as protection. The socialist origin of Bolshevism made it particularly fitted for the state-capitalist reconstruction of Russia. Its organizational principles, which had turned the party into a well-functioning institution, would re-establish order in the country as well.

The Bolsheviks, of course, were convinced that what they were building in Russia was, if not socialism, at least the next best thing to socialism, for they were completing the process which in the Western nations was still only the main *trend* of development. They had abolished the market-economy and had expropriated the bourgeoisie; they also had gained complete control over the government. For the Russian workers, however, nothing had changed; they were merely faced by another set of bosses, politicians, and indoctrinators. Their position equalled the workers' position in all capitalist countries during times of war. State-capitalism is a war-economy, and all extra-Russian economic systems transformed themselves into war-economies, into state-capitalistic systems fitted to the imperialistic needs of modern capitalism. Other nations did not copy all the innovations of Russian state-capitalism but only those best suited to their specific needs. The second world war led to the further unfolding of state-capitalism on a world-wide scale. The peculiarities of the various nations and their special situations within the world-power frame provided a great variety of developmental processes towards state-capitalism.

The fact that state-capitalism and fascism did not, and do not grow everywhere in a uniform manner provided Trotsky with the argument of the basic difference between bolshevism, fascism and capitalism plain and simple. This argument necessarily stresses superficialities of social development. In all essential aspects all three of these systems are identical and represent only various stages of the same developmnt—a development which aims at manipulating the mass of the population by dictatorial governments in a more or less authoritarian fashion, in order to secure the government and the privileged social layers which support it and to enable those governments to participate in the international economy of to-day by preparing for war, waging war, and profiting by war.

Trotsky could not permit himself to recognize in Bolshevism one aspect of the world-wide trend towards a fascist world-economy. As late as 1940 he held the view that Bolshevism prevented the rise of Fascism in the Russia of 1917. It should have long since been clear, however, that all that Lenin and Trotsky prevented in Russia was the use of a non-Marxian ideology for the fascist reconstruction of Russia. Because the Marxian ideology of Bolshevism merely served state-capitalistic ends, it, too, has been discredited. From any view that goes beyond the capitalistic system of exploitation Stalinism and Trotskyism are both relics of the past.